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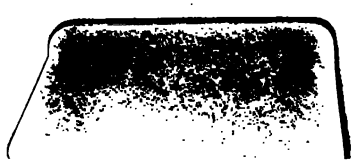

MARY ELTON;

OR,

SELF-CONTROL.

BY

MRS. H. B. PAULL.

LONDON:
FREDERICK WARNE AND CO.,
BEDFORD STREET, COVENT GARDEN.
1869.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY J. OGDEN AND CO.,
172, ST. JOHN STREET, CLERKENWELL, E.C.

MARY ELTON.

CHAPTER I.

ONE fine afternoon, many years ago, a stage-coach, with its four foaming horses, stopped at the corner of one of the principal streets in London.

"There 'tis, there 'tis!" exclaimed a little rosy, flaxen-haired girl of about three years old, whom the guard had just lifted from the coach and placed on the pavement. "There 'tis!" and she immediately started off at a rapid pace, to the great alarm of the passengers. A gentleman was assisting a lady to alight: he turned quickly, and said, "Follow her, my love; I will attend to the luggage." The lady smiled, and pointed to her little girl, now standing on the steps of a door at some distance. In the parlour of that house sat a lady at work, but not diligently: she seemed to be in anxious expectation, and every now and then would look up and listen. The

child, who had been endeavouring to reach the knocker, no sooner saw her parents approaching, than she again exclaimed, "Here 'tis, mamma! here 'tis!" There was no mistaking that silvery voice. Grandmamma started up, and by the time Mr. and Mrs. Elton reached the house, little Mary had been folded in the arms of her fond grandmamma, whose house she so well remembered. That was, indeed, a happy evening; so much to tell of their journey, and the pleasant hours they had spent many miles away with Mr. Elton's parents. Mary's little tongue went so fast that, at length tired out, she was carried to bed. Her parents, also fatigued with the journey, followed soon after, but before entering their own room, they did as many kind parents, especially mothers, often do—they went to look at their little girl. The mother of the poet Cowper must have done this, for on receiving her picture he writes—

> "Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
> To see if I was safe and warmly laid."

Little Mary was calmly sleeping, her flaxen curls falling around her pillow, and her rosy *cheeks flushed* with sleep and excitement;

she looked, indeed, the picture of happy repose, and as her young mamma kissed her, she sighed and thought how quickly the pleasant hours of infancy and youth would pass away.

Mary Elton was naturally clever and intelligent, and being the only child in the family, every one was ready to teach her. To her mother's young sisters she became at once a plaything and a pupil; her father encouraged her to learn by his notice and help, so that before Mary had reached the age of four years, she could read any book, and had acquired as much general knowledge as many children double her age.

It was well for Mary that her mother was a woman of superior and cultivated mind, one who knew well how much more important is the education of the moral qualities of the mind by early discipline and training, than the mere acquirement of knowledge. She saw that her little girl would have no difficulty in learning with so many teachers; she therefore took upon herself the task of teaching her patience, moral courage, truthfulness, and, above all, self-control, without which, *like a rudderless* ship, many a fine character

has been lost amidst the storms and tempests of life.

Mary was a child of great energy, extreme sensitiveness, and warm, impetuous feelings: still there was a timid amiability about her, which made her shrink from offending and dread the anger of those she loved. This would have made her untruthful, but for her mother's careful training; yet the disposition that gave Mrs. Elton the greatest anxiety, was an earnest clinging to anything she loved or wished for, which made her almost broken-hearted at a disappointment, and caused her to shed agonies of tears at the death of a pet bird, or the destruction of a favourite toy. In some respects, this earnest clinging to what she loved or delighted in was an advantage. Once make her love a study, and it ceased to be a difficulty; she would throw her whole soul into whatever she undertook, whether a sum in arithmetic or a good game of play, when once fairly interested in it.

Mary, however, had her favourite employments; and while even very young, reading was the chief. Lessons, work, walking, and even play would be forgotten in the delight *of a new book*; while needlework, requiring

quiet attention and less excitement, was hateful to her. Added to this—for we must tell all the truth—Mary's eager impatience made her careless and untidy in her habits, so that, when required to work, a work-box, in which sometimes neither thimble, needle, nor cotton could be found, caused the loss of more time than the work itself would have occupied.

Mrs. Elton's determination that a certain quantity of needlework should be gone through daily, was Mary's severest discipline—she knew it must be done; and besides this, it was made to contribute to her pleasures: her mother, knowing her love for books, had promised that every week's successful conquest of untidy habits should add to her pocket-money for the purpose of increasing her library. Mary was a very little girl when this rule was made, and our readers will not suppose that she gained the promised reward every week; yet, by the time she was six years old, very few children of that age could boast of a larger library. And although juvenile books were not then so numerous as they are now, Mary had a well-chosen collection, many of which she had read so often as almost to know them by heart. It

was unlikely, however, that a little girl not six years old could understand all she read; her mother therefore encouraged her to ask questions, and often explained to her in a very simple manner what had before seemed difficult and puzzling. One book, which was a great favourite, Mary had read several times without talking about it to her mother. She would have saved herself a great deal of foolish fear had she not forgotten to do so.

CHAPTER II.

"MISS MARY, it is time for you to learn your lessons," said a neat, pleasant-looking woman, as she entered the nursery one evening: "you know your mamma told you not to read too long, before she went out."

Mary was seated on the window-seat, with her feet raised, so that her knees formed a reading-desk for her book. She looked up—"Oh Nurse, just one little piece more, to finish the chapter; I won't be long; please let me?"

Nurse was very fond of her little charge; she could not resist the pleading look, so she *quietly walked* round the room, picking up

Mary's thimble from the floor, and folding up the work which she had thrown on a chair. She next took out Mary's lesson-books, and placed them on the table: five minutes passed,—"Miss Mary," said nurse, "when your mamma was a little girl I never had to tell her twice to do anything."

Mary started from her seat. "Dear Nurse. I am very sorry, but you know I shall never be as good as mamma was; do you know, I quite forgot my lessons, and had begun another chapter?" then, seeing her books, she said, "Oh, thank you, Nurse. How kind! I shall soon learn them." She reseated herself at the window, but daylight was fast disappearing; and Mary soon found she could not long see to read, and was obliged to wait for candles. It had been a rough October day; the leaves blown by the wind from the trees of an adjoining square were now whirling in circles through the street. Mary pressed her face against the window-pane, and looked out. Presently the lamplighter turned the corner, his torch flaring in the wind as he ran rapidly from one lamp to the other. London streets were not then all lighted with gas, and the flaming red torch was a very amusing sight to children.

Little boys and girls now would fancy London a dull, dismal-looking place, if they could see it as it appeared then, with no greater light in the streets and shops than dim oil-lamps. Mary's thoughts, as she watched the lamplighter, were not, however, about him, but about the wind, which seemed every moment as if it would blow out his torch; and she was glad when Nurse entered with candles, that she might finish her lessons.

"May I sit up a little longer to-night, Nurse?" asked Mary, when the clock struck eight.

Nurse looked surprised. "Why, my dear?" she asked.

"Oh," said Mary, "because it will make me tired, and then I shall go to sleep directly I get into bed, and not hear that dreadful wind."

"But the wind cannot hurt you, my darling, in your nice warm bed, with the curtains drawn round."

"No, I know that: I am not afraid of the wind making me cold; but don't talk about it, Nurse, please, it frightens me."

Nurse was surprised. Mary was by no *means a fearful* child, and what could make

her so afraid of the wind was a mystery, yet she allowed her to remain half an hour later, and then went with her to her room. It certainly was a very rough night. Mr. Elton's house being at the corner of two streets, and Mary's bedroom at the top, the roaring of the wind through the roof, and down the chimney, sounded rather alarming. Mary trembled so much while being undressed, that Nurse could not resist throwing her arms round her, and asking—"My darling, what is it makes you so afraid?"

"Oh, Nurse," said Mary, clinging closely to her, "the wind, the wind; oh, listen; it will blow the house down, I am sure it will."

"Nonsense, my dear, if that is all you are afraid of, it is very silly; your papa's house is too strongly built to be blown down easily: besides, you forget that God takes care of people while they sleep, if they pray to Him."

"I know He does, Nurse; but even then I know the wind does blow houses down sometimes."

Nurse hardly knew what to reply, but she encouraged the little trembling girl to repeat her prayers, and then reminded her of the *words she* had uttered :—

"I lay my body down to sleep,
Let angels guard my head,
And through the hours of darkness keep
Their watch around my bed."

After covering her up warmly and drawing the curtains, Nurse sat down by the bedside, and tried to soothe the little girl to sleep by telling her how unlikely it would be for such a thing to happen as that large, strong houses in London should be blown down; but it was no use, Mary knew such things had happened, she said, and would not be convinced. After this she lay so quiet for some time that Nurse thought she was asleep, and rose to go.

"Stop, Nurse, please," said Mary, who had been thinking deeply, "can I not say a prayer to God about the wind, and ask Him not to let it hurt the house?"

Nurse sat down again by the bed; the tears came into her eyes, and she did not speak for a minute or two. Mary pulled back the curtain and looked at her; she had always seemed like a picture to Mary, with her neat mob-cap, dark stuff dress, and snow-white kerchief pinned across her bosom. She was not old, although *sorrow* had silvered the dark hair that was *so smoothly braided* in white bands under her

cap. Like all servants who have lived long in one family, she was deeply attached to Mrs. Elton, whom she had nursed in her infancy, and dearly fond of the little girl who now turned to her for instruction.

"Miss Mary," she said, "your dear mamma is the best person to teach you these things."

"Oh, but she is not here now," said Mary; "do tell me one little prayer to say!"

"My dear, you can read the prayers at church; do you know which is the Litany?"

"Oh yes," said Mary, "it has a short prayer for everything. I know: is there one about the wind in that?"

"Yes, my dear, there is."

"Do teach it me, then, Nurse," said the little girl, getting out of bed; and, kneeling down, she repeated after her nurse the beautiful words,—"From lightning and tempest, from plague, pestilence, and famine, from battle and murder, and from sudden death, good Lord, deliver us."

The simple faith of the little child clung at once to what she had been told, that God is the hearer and answerer of prayer, and she laid her head on the pillow, saying, "Oh, *Nurse, I* feel quite safe now: tempest means

high wind, and it would be sudden death if I were to be killed by the house falling upon me. Will you stay and repeat those words until I have learnt them?"

Nurse did as the little girl requested, and stayed by her side till she fell asleep with almost the words on her lips.

CHAPTER III.

THE next day, as soon as Mrs. Elton sat down to work, Mary brought her little chair, and seating herself at her mother's side, inquired,—"Mamma, what is a hurricane?"

"A hurricane, Mary! What has put that into your head?"

"The wind last night, mamma."

"But there was no hurricane last night, Mary."

"No, mamma; or else it would have blown the house down."

Mrs. Elton smiled. "There is not much fear of your papa's house being blown down by the wind, Mary; but who has been telling you this?"

"No one, mamma; only——"

"*Well,—speak* out, my love," said Mrs.

Elton, as Mary held down her head, and looked half ashamed.

"Why, mamma," she said, at last, "you know my book called, 'The History of a Bible, written by Itself?'"

Mrs. Elton remembered the book.

"Well, mamma, there is a story in it of some very good people, who were at family prayer one morning, and suddenly a great wind arose, called a hurricane, and they had only just time to escape out of the house, when it was blown down by the wind: ever since I read it, I have always felt afraid when the wind blew hard."

"Why did you not tell me before, Mary?" said her mother.

"I meant to, mamma; but very often, after the wind had been blowing in the night, the sky would look so bright and clear in the morning, that I forgot all about it."

"And what has made you come to me now?"

"Why, last night, mamma, I was more afraid than ever; and dear Nurse taught me a little prayer, and told me I should ask you; although I did not tell her what I had read in *my book about* the hurricane. But, mamma,

what is a hurricane? Is it not a very strong wind?"

"It is, Mary; but the highest wind that ever blew in England is nothing to a hurricane abroad. Did not the people you read of live in the West Indies?"

"Yes, mamma. Oh, I never thought of that!"

"Hurricanes in those countries are, indeed, very dreadful," continued Mrs. Elton. "Houses, trees, and even whole villages, are sometimes destroyed by their violence, and when they happen at sea, the waves rise mountains high;—ships are cast upon rocks, or sink into the boiling ocean, while all on board perish. We are highly favoured in England, where such wind is never known; although sometimes even here it will tear up trees by the roots, or blow down stacks of chimneys; but my little Mary should remember who it is that 'holdeth the winds in His fist, and the waters in the hollow of His hand;' and then, whether she sleeps in England or in India, she will lie down in safety."

After her mother had ceased speaking, Mary sat for some time silent and thoughtful: *at length* she said, "Mamma, why does

God allow such high winds to arise?—what use can they be?"

"Ah, Mary!" said Mrs. Elton. "God does many things for which we cannot give a reason. We know they must be right, because 'He doeth all things well.' Grown people, as well as little children, often find fault with what they cannot understand; yet, Mary, I can give you a reason for high winds. Without them, the air we breathe would become impure, and we should have sickness, fevers, and death; whereas, the violent agitation of the air—which is called wind—purifies it, and prevents many serious consequences."

"Oh, mamma!" said Mary, "how silly I was not to talk to you about it before. I think I shall almost like to hear the wind blow after what you have told me. But, mamma, did you ever hear of houses being blown down in England?"

"Yes, I have, Mary; some very old houses, that were going to be pulled down."

"Oh, mamma!" said Mary, "do tell me all about it. When did it happen?"

"When I was a little girl, Mary; but I cannot allow you to sit idle any longer," said *Mrs. Elton, smiling* at the wide open eyes and

excited looks of her little girl. "You can finish that hem you began yesterday, while I tell you."

Mary held down her head, and said, slowly "I do not know where my thimble is."

"Safe in your work-box, this time, Mary; and I have cotton and a needle for you."

Mary threaded her needle, and gave the work to her mother to begin: as she took it again from her, she said, in a low tone, as if half ashamed of the excuse, "Can I listen and work too, mamma?"

"Try, Mary; it is not such a very difficult thing, after all." Mary began to work, and Mrs. Elton commenced her story.

"When I was a little girl about nine years old, several new streets were made near to your grandpapa's house; old streets destroyed; many houses pulled down; and others repaired and beautified. Three very old buildings stood nearly opposite to us: two, near the corner, were first removed; but the third, the most unsafe of them all, remained, only supported on one side by the wall of the next house. So dangerous and tottering did *it appear, that* the neighbours applied to the *owners to* have it taken down, or supported by

large beams, called props, which I think you must have seen sometimes, Mary, planted in a sloping position against houses, while those adjoining are under repair. But nothing was done; and it seemed very strange to me, as a little girl, that, while the fear of the house falling upon them would cause the neighbours to avoid that side of the street, yet there were people living in the house!"

"People living in it, mamma!" said Mary, almost breathless.

"Yes, my dear: they were very poor, and they could live there without paying any rent, which appeared a great inducement, for they would stay, although several times warned of their danger. One morning, after a rather rough night, and just before breakfast, I went into my bed-room for a book I had left on the dressing-table, which stood before the window. I had just placed my hand upon it, when a noise like thunder startled me; and, in a moment, the window became darkened, as with a cloud of smoke. Much terrified, I dropped the book, and flew out of the room, scarcely knowing what I was about. On the stairs, I met a servant, who exclaimed, 'The house!—*the house! it is* down: and all those poor peo-

ple in it!' I hardly knew where I went next; but I remember my mother taking me by the hand and leading me into a room, while she gently and quickly calmed my fears for my own safety, and told me that everything was being done to discover if the family were buried in the ruins."

"And, mamma,—oh, mamma! were they?" said Mary.

"My dear," said Mrs. Elton, "this is the most wonderful part of my story. The whole family were in the house when it fell, yet not one was hurt! Don't excite yourself so, my love," said Mrs. Elton, as Mary with flushed cheeks threw her work on the floor, clasped her hands tightly together, and said, almost in a whisper—

"Mamma; how *did* they escape?"

"I will tell you how it happened. The family were in the kitchen, underground: they had heard strange noises during the night; but just as they were going to begin breakfast, a dreadful cracking sound caused them all to rush upstairs into the passage leading to the street-door. Before they could open it, the building gave way, and fell around them *with the noise* of thunder; yet, strange

to tell, the ceiling and walls of the passage in which they stood remained perfect, although surrounded by bricks and broken timber, so that the street-door could not be opened!" *

"Oh, mamma," said Mary; "how wonderful!"

"It was wonderful. And although we must acknowledge the great providence of God in thus saving these poor people,—yet it could be accounted for in a singular manner. You remember I told you that the next house had been rebuilt, and the new wall adjoining the passage of the old house supported it. The house also fell forwards towards the street, and gave way first on the unprotected side, so that the weight of bricks, or beams, which fell on the ceiling, was not sufficient to force it in. The difficulty now was, to get the door open; and nearly an hour passed before the bricks and rubbish could be cleared away sufficiently for this to be done. All this time, those within were in total darkness; and thankful indeed they must have felt to escape from a place that might have been a *grave, but had* proved a harbour of safety, and

* A fact.

once more to behold the beautiful sunlight, and to breathe the fresh air."

"Oh, dear mamma," said Mary, "what a wonderful story. Is it all true?"

"Quite true, my dear Mary; and next time we go to see grandmamma, I will show you the beautiful house that now stands on the spot where the house fell."

Mary sat for some time after her mother had finished, silently working; and having completed the hem, she gave it to her mamma with her thimble, and quietly left the room. In a few moments she was seated by Nurse, her blue eyes opened to their widest width, relating, in her own childish way, the story she had heard. Nurse sat listening very attentively; all at once Mary exclaimed, "Why, nurse, *you* must have been there, too!—do you remember it?

"To be sure I do, my darling; and I remember, when I took your mamma to look at the ruins, she said, in her quiet, childish way, 'Don't you think, Nurse, those poor people prayed to God to take care of them last night?'"

"Oh!" said Mary, "mamma was right, *I am sure they* did. I do not think I shall

ever feel afraid of hearing the wind again. I will try to remember how wonderfully God *can* take care of people, and I will ask Him to take care of me."

CHAPTER IV.

MARY'S sixth birthday arrived, and her grandmamma invited a few little people to meet her and celebrate the day. Mary, who had been complaining for some days of pains in her limbs, and looked flushed and heavy-eyed, had been treated by her mamma as for a slight cold. She seemed so much better on the morning of her birthday, that, after being carefully wrapped up, she was taken to her grandmamma's, with the understanding that she was to remain all night. Seldom had Mary looked better than she did on this evening: excitement had flushed her cheek and brightened her eyes, making the contrast with her flaxen ringlets and fair complexion more striking; she was in excellent spirits, the life of every game, and the delight of her kind friends. It was not until the little party had dispersed to their homes, that Mrs. Elton noticed, as the excitement passed away, that she looked dull, and sat without

speaking a word. Her mamma hurried her to bed, thinking it might be fatigue. In the morning she appeared better, and sat reading in a corner of the sofa with her usual intentness. Mrs. Elton entered the room about eleven o'clock: "Come, Mary, my love, you will make your head ache if you sit reading so long. Grandmamma wants you to take a little walk with her."

"I will come, mamma," said Mary, closing her book.

Mrs. Elton had walked to the window to observe the weather—she was startled by the sound of some one falling, and a scream. She turned—Mary was on the floor.

"Mamma, I cannot walk," she said, piteously; "when I moved from the sofa I thought my legs were asleep, and the moment I tried to stand, they would bend under me, and it was such dreadful pain."

Much alarmed, Mrs. Elton attempted to raise her little girl from the ground, but at each movement she screamed so painfully, and with such a struggle to suppress it, that her mother was terrified. Grandmamma, from the *next room, had* heard the screams; she came *hurrying in,* and saw in a moment what was

the matter. Nurse, fortunately, was in the house, and she gently lifted the child with her strong arms, and placed her on the sofa, soothing her fondly as she moaned with pain, while Mrs. Elton, in eager, low tones, inquired of her mother what could be the matter with her.

"I fear," she replied, "that the child has rheumatic fever. I would offer to keep her here, my dear, but I know you would rather have her at home."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Elton, "thank you, dear mother, but I should wish her to be with me. Poor child! it will be dreadful to see her suffer," she continued, while the tears ran down her cheeks.

"If you please, ma'am," said Nurse, coming forward, "if she goes home, it must be *now*—by-and-bye it will be too late to move her."

It was, indeed, a painful task to wrap the little girl in blankets, and see how bravely she tried to act up to her mother's teachings about patience and moral courage to endure pain, and her kind friends were scarcely less relieved than herself when they had laid her comfortably *in her* own little bed, and saw her sink *to sleep with* exhaustion. From that sick-bed

Mary Elton did not rise for weeks; at one time she was not expected to live; and even at last, when hopes were raised that she might recover, the doctor feared that she would be a cripple for life. Mrs. Elton was, however, spared this severe trial. After some months she recovered so far as to be able to walk without assistance — but oh! how changed: her round rosy face had become pale and thin, her flaxen hair cut close to her forehead, and no one would have recognized, in the slight, delicate child, moving quietly about the house, or reading in a corner by herself, the rosy, animated little girl we first introduced to our readers. Mrs. Elton was only too thankful to have her restored to life, as it were from the dead, and to find her fears that Mary might be a cripple groundless. She had already lost two children, and the idea of parting with Mary had been a great trial indeed. During the spring that followed this severe illness, Mary continued so delicate that the medical man advised change of air as the only means of saving her life. Mr. Elton now thought of his parents, who resided in the West *of England,* and felt, that with them and his *kind sister,* his little girl would be safe. It was

a painful trial for Mrs. Elton to part with her little girl; but she subdued her feelings, and allowed her husband to write and ask them if they would accept such a charge. How quickly they wrote back, promising to do all in their power to restore her to health, and offering to receive her immediately! The bustle of preparation did Mary good: she watched the progress of her new frocks and bonnets, followed Nurse from room to room, giving her strict injunctions what books to pack up, and where she was to put her great doll. The delight with which she looked forward to the journey pained poor Nurse as much as it pleased her: she felt happy to see her darling so cheerful, yet sorry to part with her. The day came at last: Mrs. Elton clung to her little girl as if she could not spare her even then. Indeed, to no one else but her husband's sister would she have trusted her child. Mary, too, forgot all her anticipations of pleasure when she came to part from her mother and brother; and, dreading the effects of excitement on her delicate little girl, the mother checked her own feelings, for Mary's flushed face and glistening eyes, as she threw her arms *round Nurse's neck,* kissed over and over again

her little brother, and clung convulsively to her mother, told too plainly that the old nature was still there, though kept down by weakness. After a long and fatiguing journey, during which Mr. Elton had more than once trembled for his child's life, he reached Byford, and was received with open arms by his parents and sister,—but oh, how shocked were these kind friends to perceive, that, but for the round blue eyes, they would have found it difficult to discover any resemblance to the rosy little girl who had visited them three years before.

The town of Byford, in which Mr. Elton's father lived, is curiously built on the banks of a beautiful river, from which the ground rises with a steep ascent, the houses situated one above another to the very brow of the hill, and those at the top commanding a most beautiful view of the town, the river, and the surrounding country. A long, handsome bridge connects one part of the town with the other, and vessels of all sizes going out and coming in, make the quay at which they discharge their cargoes a very lively, bustling place. Now and then a ship is launched by *shipbuild*ers in the town; so that, although *Mary* Elton was so far away from noisy

London, there were many things in Byford to amuse and interest her. Besides this, the sea is not three miles distant, and many pleasant excursions and picnics are made, both by water and by land, to the beach, during the summer months. We are describing the place as it is now, for thirty years have made but little change, excepting that the streets and shops are lighted with gas, and very lately a railroad has been opened, by which persons can travel from London to Byford in eight or nine hours, instead of twenty-five or twenty-six, as was the case when Mr. Elton travelled with his sick little daughter. These, no doubt, are great advantages, but the pretty little town, with its bright river and pleasant walks, was enough for Mary without them, and very few weeks passed before her appetite and spirits began to improve; not till then would her father leave her. This was another trial, but she bore it bravely, although the tears would come when she saw the coach start, and watched him kissing his hand to her until it was out of sight. Mary had a kind friend in her dear Aunt Elton, and the close pressure of her hand as she returned home told Miss Elton that now she felt herself deprived of all

other earthly friends, the little trusting nature was clinging to her, and her heart opened towards her brother's child with loving sympathy.

For some months after Mary's arrival at Byford, nothing was thought of but her health; books and work were laid aside for daily walks or healthful play, yet her mind was not neglected. Miss Elton had a very pleasant method of imparting instruction by conversation, which the little girl quickly found out, and the moment she saw her aunt seated at work, she would fetch her little chair, seat herself at her aunt's knee, as she had so often done with her dear mother, and looking up in her face, would say,—

"Dear aunt, please tell me some pretty story —a true story, I mean—I don't like made-up stories."

The knowledge Mary acquired in this way was astonishing. Miss Elton had a fund of information, and Mary learnt more of Grecian, Roman, and English history in six months, than many young people acquire in years of study. Bible stories, too, were her delight, and she would listen with streaming eyes *to the* history of Joseph, or with eager

enthusiasm to the story of David and Goliath.

During all this time, by careful exercise, regular diet, and sea-bathing, Mary was regaining her strength wonderfully. Letters home contained accounts of her improving health, but Miss Elton did not think her sufficiently recovered to return. Mr. Elton, who felt the value of his sister's instruction, had no wish to send for his little girl yet, especially as her mother was at present so delicate ; Mrs. Elton also appreciated too highly the value of her aunt's instructions to deprive her of them merely for the pleasure of having her at home again. One thing, however, she much regretted ; she had never intended to send Mary to school, but Mr. Elton's parents were aged people, to whom the constant presence of a lively child, as Mary soon became, was wearisome ; and to keep her from intercourse with other children would have been injurious. Besides, schools in a country town are very different from those in London, and were more so thirty years ago than now. All objection, therefore, was set aside, and arrangements made for Mary to go for a few hours daily to a *preparatory school* at a short distance from her

grandfather's house, merely to learn the most simple English studies, with writing, arithmetic, and needle-work.

CHAPTER V.

MR. ELTON'S house was situated about the middle of the town, and Mary's school at the end nearest the bridge. To this school there were two ways: one through a narrow street, and the other along the quay; the latter being by far the more lively and pleasant. Mary went to school alone: in a quiet country town there seemed no danger in this, excepting from the river, and she had already proved herself so truthful and obedient that it was considered sufficient to desire her on no account to go to school along the quay. Mary's dear mamma had trained her too well to make it likely she would openly disobey; and yet one morning she transgressed the command almost without knowing what she was about.

Within a few doors of Mary's school stood a large grammar-school for boys. The school-room windows overlooked those of Mary's, and many were the symptoms of fear and

trembling among the little girls when they heard the sounds of pain and distress uttered by some unfortunate culprit undergoing a flogging. These boys were accustomed to attend school from seven to eight o'clock, before breakfast, and, sad to tell, some of them not having prepared their lessons properly, were kept to learn and repeat them after the rest had left; consequently, Mary would sometimes meet a party of these boys returning when she was going to school at a little before nine.

Dunces are generally idle, and idle persons are seldom out of mischief; it was not long; therefore, before the quiet, timid-looking little girl was marked out as an object of fun. One morning, therefore, when Mary reached the narrowest part of the street, she found her way obstructed by five or six great boys, who had joined their hands, and stretched themselves across the whole way. At first she looked confused, and then her mother's lessons on moral courage gave her strength.

"Let me pass, if you please," she said, fearlessly.

"Oh, of course, Miss Prim," replied one of the boys; "would you like to creep under our

arms, or jump over our heads? either way will do, whichever is most agreeable."

Mary took no notice of this speech, but walked down the line, making the same request to the other boys, and looking eagerly in their faces to see if she could discover one with a kinder look than the rest. But no; she then attempted to push her way through their arms, but that was indeed useless, the weak against the strong, and so many. Again she pleaded, "Pray do let me pass, I shall be late for school."

The boys laughed. "To be sure, that is what we want you to be. Do they put you on the fool's-cap for being late?"

Mary now became indignant. "You have no right to stop me," she said; "how dare you try to make me late at school!" and again she made a violent effort to break through the obstruction. This was fine fun for the boys; they laughed, and jeered, and mocked her, till the tears, which pride had kept down, almost started from her eyes. At length she turned round proudly, saying, "I shall go home and see if my grandfather will *not force* you to let me pass."

The boys, however, were satisfied for this

time. Not exactly knowing who her grandfather might be, they called her back, and opening a way for her, bowed with mock politeness and ran off.

Poor Mary! this was but the beginning of trouble. She did not meet them every morning, partly because by being a little earlier she reached school before they had left, and also because the same boys were not always kept in. Still, the annoyance occurred three or four times, until the poor child became quite nervous, and surprised her aunt by her anxiety to be at school before nine. One morning, however, after several days had passed without meeting her enemies, who no doubt thought themselves very superior to the little girl they delighted in teasing, she was running gaily to school, forgetful of everything but her anxiety to be there in time, when she saw a number of them coming towards her. Between them and herself was a narrow lane, connecting the street with the quay. No thought entered her mind but how she should avoid her tormentors. In a moment she darted down the lane, and along the quay, nor did she stop till breathless with running she reached her school, and then *she remembered* her act of disobedience.

Many children, no doubt, will think, "Oh, but then Mary had such a good excuse." She did not think so. He mother had taught her that obedience was to stop at no difficulty. The straightforward path is the only right path, and whatever excuse might be offered, an act of disobedience was disobedience still. She never forgot that day at school; for until she had told her aunt, and asked her forgiveness, she could not feel comfortable. Miss Elton readily forgave the little girl, although she smiled at her description of the terror she felt when she saw the boys approaching. She told her, however, if it continued, that she would write to Dr. Hatton, the head-master, and ask him to interfere. But Mary did not wait for her aunt to do this: she took the law into her own hands. It was a bold thing for a little girl to do, and it happened in this way. One morning, about a week after telling her aunt, she was much alarmed by seeing a larger number than usual of the pupils approaching; and while considering what she should do to avoid them, she saw that they were accompanied by two of the masters, one of them *Dr. Hatton* himself. With some of her old *impetuosity* and energy of character, she in-

stantly determined to speak to him. It was a dangerous experiment, and scarcely wise for Mary to risk making herself an object of insult as well as fun among the pupils of the Grammar-school; few little girls of seven years, however, reflect upon the consequences of what they are going to do. She passed the boys rather proudly, feeling secure of their behaviour in such presence, and approaching Dr. Hatton, said, in her gentle, silvery voice, "May I speak to you, sir, if you please?"

Dr. Hatton stopped instantly, and looked earnestly at her. "Are you not Mr. Elton's grandchild, my dear?" said the Doctor, kindly.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what do you wish to say to me?"

Mary timidly, but as quickly as possible, described the annoyance she had received, and, with perfect confidence that his word would be law, begged him to prevent it in future.

"But, my dear," said the clergyman, "my pupils generally leave at eight o'clock; at what time do you go to school?"

"*At nine*, sir,"

"Ah, then," he replied, rather sternly, "it must be the idlers and the dunces who annoy you: they shall not do it again."

The severe tone startled Mary. In a moment there flashed across her memory the recollection of the floggings she had heard from the school-room windows, and the idea that her complaining might produce such dreadful consequences filled her with terror. She laid her little hand on the clergyman's arm, and exclaimed, "Oh, sir, you won't flog them, will you? Oh, it is not bad enough for that; pray, pray, do not let them be punished at all; only tell them not to do it again. I am sure they will obey you. Promise me, sir, please," she continued, her eyes filled with tears of regret for having said a word about it.

Dr. Hatton smiled, and promised all she wished; but as he turned from the little girl who thanked him so warmly, he said to himself, "The woman's nature all over: patient endurance and earnest forgiveness."

The grammar-school at Byford consisted of the sons of men of influence and position in the neighbourhood. The numbers were large, and not one amongst them would have endured *quietly* to be told he was not a gentle-

man, because he was the son of a gentleman, and born to wealth and position. This is a great mistake, and so Dr. Hatton made them understand. On the afternoon of the day on which Mary had complained, and just before the hour for dismissing the school, Dr. Hatto requested each young gentleman to seat himself at his desk, while he asked a few questions. The order was obeyed in silence and dismay. When all were seated, Dr. Hatton said, "Let every boy who has been kept in at morning school during the last month stand up."

Slowly the culprits arose, some with looks of shame, others with indifference. There was no escape for them: the under-master had opened a book in which their names were recorded.

"Now," said Dr. Hatton, "I am not going to inquire which of you have been cowardly and rude enough to annoy a quiet, ladylike little girl, in the open streets: it is sufficient to know that some of you have done so—the child appealed to me to-day for protection. Shame upon you, no doubt calling yourselves gentlemen, to make an object of fun of one so *much weaker* and younger than either of you.

You may think all this a grand display of courage and superior strength; but men and boys of really noble spirit shrink from such conduct, and will rather take part with the oppressed, even though it may be a poor half-starved cat or a trembling unfledged bird. You will understand," he continued, "that she has proved herself superior to you all, by entreating me not to punish you in any way, only begging me to protect her for the future. Nothing but my promise to her has saved you; and be sure, if I hear of such conduct again, either to this child or any other, the severest punishment shall follow."

We cannot tell how far the Doctor's address did good to these cowardly boys: one thing is certain—Mary never again met with the slightest annoyance from the pupils of Byford grammar-school.

More than twelve months passed away, and Mary continued to improve in health and spirits. A little of her former colour and vivacity returned; but her friends, fearing to presume too much upon this increased strength, continued to send her to the preparatory school as at first. With no young companions at [illegible], her love of reading increased so much

that Miss Elton was obliged to allow her only a certain number of hours to read daily. Her grandmother had taught her to knit, and this was an amusement she soon became fond of; and greatly did it surprise her mamma to receive two pairs of socks for her little brother, knitted by Mary's own hands.

One morning, while Mary was at school two boxes arrived from London. Miss Elton opened them both, and finding that one contained nothing but books, she put it aside, and sent for Mary to unpack the other herself. Mary's delight at being sent for from school was only equalled by her joy at the contents of the box: a large doll, with clothes of every description, a transparent slate, a humming-top, a skipping-rope, a box of dominoes, a dissected map of Europe, and multiplication table cards, such as many little boys and girls would like to have now, but there are none published. Very pretty pictures of animals and birds of every description were painted on cards, which were cut in half; the half containing the head of the animal had printed underneath it the question, and on the other half, containing the tail, the answer would be *found.* *Mary* soon learnt how to use them.

It was very simple. For instance, having found the head and half the body of a horse, under which was written "9 times 8," it could be quickly matched with the other half, containing the answer "are 72." This certainly was a delightful way of learning the multiplication table. Mary's box also contained several books, which were eagerly seized upon—she knew nothing of the number in store for her.

Several weeks slipped by before the excitement occasioned by the box and its contents had passed away. Her aunt only allowed her to have one amusement at one time, and thus the pleasure they caused was never quite lost. When she had read over and over again the small stock of books which were such a treasure to her when discovered at the bottom of the box, Miss Elton, to her surprise, brought out one from the hidden store.

"Why, aunt," said the little girl, opening her eyes with delight at a newly published tale, handsomely bound, "where did you get this?"

"Never mind," said Miss Elton; "read it, and do not ask any questions; but am I to *have no thanks?*"

"Oh yes! dear aunt," she exclaimed, jumping up and clinging to her neck; "but it seems almost too good to be true."

If Mary was astonished this time, it is impossible to describe her feelings when, having read and studied this delightful book, at the end of a few weeks Miss Elton produced from its hiding-place a copy of "Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress," with many engravings, old-fashioned certainly, but suited to the fashion of the time in which he wrote. The pleasure excited by this book, and the conversations she had with her aunt about it, seemed to be inexhaustible; and Miss Elton was obliged to produce another to divert her mind from dwelling too much on the same subject.

The appearance of the third book gave Mary some idea of the truth, and she exclaimed, "Now, aunt, I have found you out: mamma sent me all these books, and you have hidden them, for fear I should read them too quickly. Am I not right?" Miss Elton smiled. "Oh, aunt," she said, earnestly, "are there any more? Oh, do tell me! I will not hurry over this one—only just tell me that."

"When you have read that one carefully, *Mary," said* her aunt, "you shall have another,

but I shall not tell you anything more, so do not ask me."

Mary knew that her aunt's word could not be shaken; she therefore walked away with her new treasure, quite satisfied to think that there was still another when she had read it.

She now made it a rule, when her aunt gave her out a new book, to say with trembling earnestness, "Is there one more yet, aunt?" When, after receiving six or seven books, the answer was still, "Yes, there is another," Mary could scarcely contain herself.

"Why, aunt," she said, jumping about the room with great glee, "you are like a fairy: it seems as if you touched something with your wand, and it turned to a book."

It was indeed a clever arrangement, for the pleasure was now spread over many months; and had Mary taken possession of the books all at once, they would have been hurried over without creating half the gratification they now caused.

CHAPTER VI.

STORY-BOOKS very often represent little girls *as almost always* good; but although Mary had

received such careful instruction, and her friends hoped she would grow up an obedient child, yet she was not perfect; and as we are writing a true history, we must tell the whole truth. One disadvantage attended Mary's continuance at the preparatory school; she was in danger of becoming vain at finding how much more she knew than many girls older than herself. Several of them were the daughters of respectable farmers in the neighbourhood, who considered the instruction they would receive in such a school quite sufficient. Mary, by this time, was advanced enough in her studies to join the pupils at the establishment of Miss Ferrars, who did not take any under eight years old, and received very high terms for a town like Byford. Mr. Elton, however, when written to on the subject, was unwilling to consent, from a fear for Mary's health; indeed, all her friends knew that her love for study, if excited by emulation, would render her so enthusiastic in her endeavours to be the head of a class, or to win a prize, that her health might suffer; therefore she was allowed to remain amongst girls, very few of whom could excel her in anything. Miss Elton, by constantly *pointing out* to Mary her superior advantages,

kept her, to a certain degree, humble; but there were other dangers amongst girls of indifferent education, who had not been taught the importance of implicit obedience: two in particular, the daughters of a wealthy farmer, Miss Elton knew were not fit companions for her little niece. Mary, therefore, had strict injunctions not to make acquaintance with them after school, but always to come straight home; and as these girls lived in quite a contrary direction, there seemed no danger of any temptation to disobey. The temptation came at last.

It was a bright afternoon in June, the clock had struck four, and Mary was standing on the steps at her school-door, watching her schoolfellows, Ellen and Mary White, trying to persuade one of their father's farm-sevants to allow them to ride home on the back of a hay-cart; when they had gained their point, and were comfortably seated, one of them espied Mary.

"Mary Elton!" she exclaimed, "oh, come and have a ride; it is so delightful here; such fun. Stay one moment, Thomas," she exclaimed to the man; "come, Mary, make haste."

"No, thank you," said Mary; "I must go home;" but she still lingered on the step.

"Why must you go home? I'm sure your aunt wouldn't mind you having a ride for a little way—such a beautiful day too."

The sun was indeed shining brightly; the river sparkling and dancing in its light; the tide was up, and one or two vessels, with their sails swelling to a gentle breeze, were leaving the quay. Mary hesitated.

"Come, little miss," said the man; "if ee be gwine, I beant going to ztay 'ere all day."

Mary could not resist. She allowed herself to be lifted up, and placed between the two girls whom her aunt had desired her to avoid. Away they went, over the bridge, through the outskirts of the town, and along the green shady lanes, every moment carrying Mary farther away from home. For more than a mile the noisy mirth of her companions, and the novelty of her position, prevented all reflection in Mary's mind of what she was about; presently they passed a milestone, and upon it she read, "Two miles to Byford." In great alarm, she now entreated her companions to stop the driver, and allow her to get down, *but they* enjoyed her fears, and laughingly

told her they intended to take her home with them, and keep her all night. Mary's cries at this became so distressing that the man heard them, and stopping his horses, came round to the back of the cart, and inquired what was the matter.

"Oh, lift me down, please do," said Mary; "I am all this long way from Byford. How shall I get home?"

"Beant 'ee goin hoame, my dear?" said the man, as he lifted her down.

"Oh no, no," she replied; "I live in Byford."

"For sheame on ye, then, to bring the cheeld all this way," said the man to his master's daughters, who were laughing heartily at Mary's terror. "Ne'er ye mind, my dear," he continued, kindly, "keep the straight road till 'ee coom to the toon; and ye'll soon get hoame."

Mary thanked him, and taking the direction the man pointed out, began to walk very quickly. Then came reflection. She had disobeyed, and no doubt alarmed, her kind friends, and she dreaded the displeasure she so well deserved. Again, she thought of her dear mamma's surprise, at seeing her little *gentle Mary* riding like a rude boy through

a town behind a hay-cart, even had she known nothing of the disobedience; and above all, Mary remembered she had offended God, and she could only walk very fast towards home, weeping with sorrow and regret for what she had done.

In the meantime, the old clock, in the kitchen of Grandfather Elton's house, struck five. The old gentleman listened to the sound with surprise; then rising, he took his hat and stick, and walked out in search of his little grandchild. In spite of their confidence in Mary's obedience, there was always a fear in the minds of her friends that she might be tempted near the river and fall in; it was to the quay, therefore, he first directed his steps, dreading that every one he met might have bad news to tell. He then called at the school, and found she had left at four o'clock; after inquiring at the houses of some neighbours without hearing any news of her, he returned home, expecting to find the little girl had arrived. Miss Elton met him at the door.

"Have you seen her?" she inquired.

"No; has she not come home?"

Miss Elton shook her head. Much alarmed, but too fatigued to continue his search, the old

gentleman threw himself into his arm-chair, and Miss Elton was leaving the room to prepare herself to go out, when the garden-gate opened, and the little feet were heard timidly approaching.

"Oh, thank God, she is safe!" exclaimed the old gentleman; "don't scold her, Fanny. I am only too happy to have her return alive."

Ah, young people, how seldom do you reflect on the sorrow and anxiety your disobedience causes those friends whose every wish and command is for your own welfare and happiness. Mary had not courage to face the kind friends she had so grieved and alarmed; she therefore crept away to her bed-room, whither she was soon followed by her aunt, to whom, with many tears of shame and sorrow, she confessed her disobedience; very gently, and with anxious love, did her kind aunt point out the sin and folly of which she had been guilty, and then she knelt and prayed with her for forgiveness, and for power to resist temptation. Perhaps Mary understood a little of the grief she had caused her kind grandfather and grandmother when she received the kiss of forgiveness, and heard their thankful expressions of gratitude for her safety.

Not many weeks after this occurrence, Mary was surprised and delighted by a visit from her father; how rejoiced was he to find her so much improved in health and appearance, and how gladly would he have taken her home with him, for her dear mother's heart yearned for her little Mary: yet he hesitated; she was growing very fast, and had still a delicacy of complexion that did not indicate confirmed health. His parents and sister, who felt unwilling to part with the little girl until she was quite strong, urged all these facts as reasons for her stay, with great earnestness. Mr. Elton therefore agreed to leave her for another twelve months; he could not bear to deprive his little daughter of the benefit likely to follow this extended visit, in addition to the advantage of his sister's kind and judicious training. Mary, although longing to see her dear mother and brothers, one of whom, a baby, she had never seen, submitted pleasantly to the arrangement; she loved her grandfather, grandmother, and aunt too well to grieve them by showing any over-anxiety to go away.

During the winter that followed Mr. Elton's *visit, Mary, to* her regret, finished the last of

her aunt's hidden store of books. In March, she was to commence her studies with Miss Ferrars, and to continue with her for six months. The long stay at the preparatory school had not been lost; it now gave her the advantage of being able to read the most difficult lesson with ease and quickness, and to write exercises neatly and readily. She soon gained a high position in her class, and, but for a caution given to Miss Ferrars, she might have been tempted to try how much the wonderfully retentive memory could bear. Mary was delighted with her school, and always ready to learn her lessons, which, although much more numerous and difficult than any she had been used to, were, seemingly, quite easy to her. Therefore, as the summer approached, Miss Elton was surprised to see her little niece sometimes quite sleepy and inclined for bed before seven o'clock. Half-past six was her usual hour for rising, and, for more than a year, she had been allowed to sit up till half-past eight; and yet two or three nights in the week she would fall asleep in her chair, after learning her lessons. This continued for nearly a month. Miss *Elton was beginning* to fear that her studies

were beyond her strength, when Mary herself betrayed her own secret.

"Aunt," she exclaimed, suddenly, one evening, "are there really such things as genii?"

The words were no sooner uttered, than she recollected what she had done; face, neck, and even arms were crimsoned with conscious shame. Oh, what a tell-tale conscience is! but for that blush, Miss Elton would have explained and answered her question, without inquiring why she asked it. Now she looked at her earnestly.

"Where did you read about genii, Mary?" she asked.

The little girl was silent, and her aunt deeply pained; what could cause so much shame as to render her speechless. Miss Elton could now only trust to the truthfulness of her little niece: she saw the struggle, as the tears trickled down her cheeks, and she waited with hope and fear for the answer. Mary had turned to the window to hide her tears, when suddenly, with a violent effort, she flew into her aunt's lap, threw her arms round her neck, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"*Oh! aunt,* aunt," at length burst forth in

choking accents, "I have been so wicked; you will never forgive me. Oh! I shall never, never, be so good as mamma!"

"My dear," said Miss Elton, "do not say I shall never forgive you; try me, dear Mary, if you have done wrong. I am sure you are ashamed and sorry by your tears; tell me all about it; you will be miserable now till you have done so."

Mary hid her face on her aunt's shoulder, and said in a low voice, "Aunt, I have been reading the 'Tales of the Genii,' one of the books in the corner cupboard, over my bed, that you told me not to open."

Miss Elton was very sorry—this direct act of disobedience pained her. Yet she blamed herself, knowing, as she did, Mary's love of reading; she should have locked the cupboard, to prevent her from being tempted beyond her strength to resist. This curious corner cupboard, its dark ebony doors, inlaid with Chinese figures in gold, had been one of the first things to attract Mary's attention, and when she found it contained books, excited a longing curiosity she could never overcome. Miss Elton, knowing that among these books were some not exactly suitable for a child to

read, had forbidden her to touch them. The box from London had arrived in time to divert her mind from the forbidden place, but when that was exhausted, the temptation had returned with full force.

"Have you read any other of the books?" inquired Miss Elton, at length.

"Yes, aunt; 'Gil Blas,' 'Don Quixote,' 'Telemachus,' and now I am reading the 'Arabian Nights!'"

Miss Elton was amazed. "My dear child, how did you find time to read all these books?"

"Aunt, I used to wake in the morning as soon as it was light; and read till it was time to get up. Not every morning; sometimes I did not wake, but when I was in the middle of a story I was sure to, because I thought about it so much.

"And," said Miss Elton, much astonished, "could you understand what you read?"

"A great deal I did, aunt," said Mary; "but there were lots and lots of words I never heard in my life, and I longed to ask you, but I did not dare; till to-night it slipped out, I can't tell how. Dear aunt," she continued, *looking up* through her tears at her aunt's

face, "you are not quite so angry as I expected."

"My dear," said Miss Elton, "your disobedience grieves me, but it was partly my fault. I thought you more perfect than a little girl ever could be; I hoped, when my little Mary was told not to touch the corner cupboard, she would have feared to disobey and offend God."

"Oh! dear, kind Aunt Fanny," said the little girl; "what shall I say, to tell you how sorry I am, but it was such a dreadful temptation —all those books staring at me every day."

"I know it, my darling; but God sends temptations to His people to try them; and don't you know what He has promised, that He will, with the temptation, send a way of escape? Ah! Mary, I am afraid you did not pray to God to help you to conquer this temptation.

"No, indeed, aunt," said Mary, "that I did not; but I will. Oh! I will to-night. And, dear aunt, don't lock the cupboard; you shall see I will never touch the books again."

Mary kept her word, and when she left *Byford, her* aunt chose from the forbidden

store several which she thought Mary would like to read when she grew older; saying, as she did so, "Mary these books will remind you how necessary it is to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation.'"

CHAPTER VII.

THE affair of the corner cupboard was, very shortly after, driven from Mary's mind by a circumstance which brought to light the disposition her mother so much dreaded—that earnest clinging to anything she loved or delighted in. Miss Elton had hitherto had no opportunity of noticing this: the child's delicate health had made her more tranquil; a very trifling event showed her aunt how enthusiastic her little niece could be.

To encourage her to take exercise in the open air, Mr. Elton had given her, during her first spring in Byford, a small plot of ground, to cultivate according to her own taste. It was by this time a very pretty spot, enclosed by a border of single and double daisies; one part, in which stood a beautiful standard rose-tree, was kept for flowers, and in the other she sowed radishes and mustard-and-cress. Mary's

garden proved a great pleasure and amusement to her. Old Mr. Elton might well be very proud of *his* garden; it was well kept and attended, so that fruit, flowers, and vegetables, according to the different seasons of the year, were always in plentiful supply. Not far from Mary's little garden stood a very rare cherry-tree, which, notwithstanding all the care and attention it had received, had never yet borne any fruit. During the spring of Mary's last year at Byford, it was covered with blossoms, and many hopes were entertained that at last there must be some cherries. As May approached, however, the blossoms dropped off, and their white petals covered Mary's little garden, leaving the tree as usual, with apparently nothing but leaves. The energy of Mary's character did not allow her to be easily discouraged. She watched the tree daily, lifting leaf after leaf within her reach, searching for fruit, as the anxious mother often seeks in vain for the good effects of earnest instruction to a darling child.

One half-holiday, as Mr. Elton was dozing in his arm-chair after dinner, Mary ran into the house from the garden, exclaiming, "*Grandfather!* grandfather! oh! come, quick,

I have such a wonder to show you!" At the same time she commenced pulling the bewildered old gentleman from his chair. Mr. Elton felt rather inclined to chide the little girl for her merciless interruption of his nap, but it was impossible to resist the earnest, smiling face, looking up at him so imploringly; he therefore roused himself, and putting on a look of wondering expectation, allowed her to lead him up the steps into the garden. On reaching the top, Mary darted forward, and in a moment stood before the cherry-tree, her eyes sparkling with pleasure, and her flaxen ringlets waving in the wind.

"Grandfather!" she exclaimed, as he slowly approached, "look here!" and lifting some leaves, she exhibited two cherries already in an advanced state of formation, and promising to be very large.

"Why, my little girl," said the old gentleman, fairly interested, "this is, indeed, a wonder; I cannot scold you now for disturbing my nap."

"Oh, I knew that, dear grandfather," said Mary, capering about with excitement and delight; "I was quite sure you would be pleased to see cherries on the wonderful tree, after all,

grandfather, it may be a good tree and bring you plenty of fruit next year."

"Perhaps it may, my dear," said Mr. Elton, looking with pleasure on the hitherto worthless, though promising tree; "and as for these cherries, if they ripen and do not fall off, they shall be yours on your birthday, as you discovered them."

"Oh, thank you! dear grandfather! how kind! you can't think how I have searched and searched every day, so carefully. I thought, with all those beautiful blossoms, there must be some fruit."

"Ah! my child," said her grandfather, with a sigh, "many are the beautiful blossoms of earth that produce nothing but disappointment, as well as those of a cherry-tree." Then after a pause, he continued, "Well, my dear watch your cherries; they are your own now, and much more promising fruit than this now appears has been blighted before it could reach perfection." So saying, he returned to the house and his arm-chair, reflecting on the vanity of all earthly hopes,—bright, beautiful blossoms, blighted by the cold blast of earth's dread realities.

It was now that the intense earnestness of

Mary's character showed itself to her aunt, by the enthusiasm with which she watched the growth of her cherries, and the dread she felt lest they should never ripen. The first thing in the morning, the last at night, before going to school, and instantly on returning, without taking off her bonnet, was to run into the garden to look at her cherries; she could think of nothing else; if the truth must be told, lessons were neglected, work misplaced, even books set aside; and sad to tell, on one or two occasions, her morning prayer forgotten. Miss Elton was surprised; she had never seen her little niece like this, and she determined to leave her to herself, only reminding her, now and then, of neglected duties. She hoped to make the cherries a medium for a lesson to Mary, never to be forgotten.

Miss Elton had a Bible-class at the Sunday-school; many of the girls who formed it were almost young women, yet Mary, who generally went with her aunt, would listen with eager intelligence to her kind instructions, and prepare answers for the same questions with them, Miss Elton keeping her humble by constantly pointing out her great advantages. On the *Sunday before* Mary's birthday, Miss Elton

had chosen for her subject, "The vanity of all earthly hopes," and required from her scholars texts of scripture as proofs, and also others in which we are taught to look for higher and more lasting happiness. Mary had chosen for one of the latter, the third chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, in which are the words, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." From this subject, Miss Elton explained to her attentive class the necessity of early discipline of the heart. She told them of those who, not having learned to bear disappointments in youth, often, when the sorrows of life fell upon them, became the victims of broken hearts, soured tempers, or reckless despair; and worse still, of others, whose characters had never been controlled in childhood, and who, resting all their fondest hopes on the things of this life, and failing to realize the happiness they had expected, had sunk into insanity, or, unable to bear the bitter disappointment, had been tempted to take their own lives, and rush, uncalled, into the presence of their Maker. Mary, who listened to all, and understood much of *what her* aunt said, was still quite unaware *that any of it* could apply to a little girl like

herself; and at present, Miss Elton did not address her in particular—she waited.

The long looked for birthday arrived; it wanted but a few days to the midsummer vacation; Mary, who was too busy at school to get home until just in time for dinner, could not go into the garden. No sooner, however, had the cloth been removed than she asked permission to fetch her cherries —it was granted; away she bounded out of the house, up the garden steps, and stood breathless before the tree. The cherries were gone! In vain she lifted leaf after leaf; no, she had not mistaken the bough—they were really gone. It took some moments, however, to make Mary believe this; we are slow to realize the disappointment of our hopes. She burst into an agony of tears, and turned towards the house with a rapid step. Those cherries she had tended so carefully, so beautiful they had looked in the morning, large, full, and ripe. Our readers must not mistake: our little Mary was by no means greedy; she had not the slightest intention of eating the rare fruit herself; but to think that after all they should be stolen. Oh, it was too much, and again her sobs almost choked her. Suddenly there

flashed across the little girl's mind her aunt's teaching on the previous Sunday. The violent grief was hushed in a moment. "Why," she said to herself, "aunt meant me, when she talked about people fixing their expectations too strongly on anything. I feel more sorry about these cherries than if all the fruit in the garden had been stolen,—I suppose it is because I did set my mind upon them so much."

Slowly and quietly, with the tears, which would come, following one another down her cheeks, she entered the parlour. "Grandfather," she said mournfully, "the beautiful cherries are gone! who could have taken them? they must have been stolen."

"Are you quite sure, Mary?" said Miss Elton, in a pleasant voice. Mary looked up through her tears, and lo! on the table were two or three dishes of fruit, one of them containing cherries, on the top of which, innocently reposing in a fresh vine-leaf, were laid Mary's rare and long-watched favourites. Her look of astonishment was quickly followed by a smile glistening through her tears, like sunshine through an April shower. Throwing herself *on her aunt's* neck, she exclaimed, "Aunt, *dear aunt! you* did this to show me the mean-

ing of what you said on Sunday. Oh, I know it all now."

There was no occasion for Miss Elton to explain; the quick, sensitive feeling of her little niece sufficiently understood and appreciated what she had done. She merely kissed away the tears, exclaiming, "God grant, my darling, that your future disappointments and sorrows may be as comparatively slight, and as patiently endured, as this!"

The next three months seemed to pass away very quickly, and Mary was almost as much surprised as delighted when her father arrived to take her home. It was with feelings of deep gratitude to God, and thankfulness to his kind parents and sisters, that Mr. William Elton again clasped his little daughter in his arms, and compared her now blooming, healthy appearance, with the delicate child he had placed under their care three years before. The delight Mary felt at going home, and the prospect of seeing her dear mother and little brothers, was very natural, still she could not bear to think of leaving her kind friends at Byford; her grandfather and grandmother were both growing old, and the thought would come, "*Perhaps I* may never see them again."

When the day at length arrived, the same thought seemed to impress them all, and the deep and heartfelt blessings poured upon her head by these aged friends, as they bade her farewell, made her feel as if she could not leave them. She clung to her aunt's neck, and whispered, "Dear, dear aunt Fanny, thank you for teaching me so much. Oh, indeed, I will try never to forget it."

At length Mr. Elton hurried her away, and as she looked out of the coach-window to say "Good-bye" once more to her aunt, who stood to see them off, she checked her sobs, and said, "Aunt, I can write you letters now, and when I grow a woman, I shall come and see you again; and—" she was going to add, "dear grandfather and grandmother," but she stopped, and again her tears burst forth. Miss Elton was almost glad when the coachman mounted the box; the ostlers whisked away the covering from the horses, and the four noble animals started forward with their burden, prancing and curvetting as they went. She felt almost a mother's love for the warm-hearted child, whose deep feelings were so clinging to earthly objects, and so excitable, so *sensitive* for those she loved, and she knew

how much she would have to contend with in a world where all is cold, harsh, and unsatisfying.

How different did this long, tedious journey appear now to the travellers; they were going home, and Mr. Elton could think of nothing but the delight her mother would feel at seeing the improvement in a child she had once mourned for as sick unto death. He told his little girl of her new brother, a baby about a month old; described her second brother, Willie, whom she had also never seen; and told her that Aunt Kate, her mother's youngest sister, would meet them at the coach-office.

It was a lovely September afternoon, as the coach stopped at the White Horse Cellar; a lady, who recognized her brother-in-law, advanced to meet him; she looked at Mary with a doubtful countenance. "Is it possible?" she said at last, seeing Mr. Elton smile; "Oh, will not Maria be delighted?" In the hackney coach that conveyed them home, Aunt Kate took off Mary's bonnet, wiped the dust from her face, combed out the long flaxen ringlets, and arranged her dress, that she *might look her* best to her mother. "Thank

you, dear aunt Kate," said Mary, "but I did not remember you at first; I think I do now; only it seems such a long while ago." Aunt Kate kissed her fondly. "My dear Mary, I should know you by your voice, that is just the same, but you are a great girl now, and I could scarcely believe it was our little Mary."

A family party had assembled in Mr. Elton's drawing-room. Mrs. Elton's mother, and two sisters, her brother, and his wife, and an old uncle, Colonel Herbert. She herself sat on the sofa, looking pale, but calm, with her infant on her lap. By her side sat a noble boy of five, his large black eyes anxiously turned upon his mother. At length he inquired, "How long will it be now, mamma, before Mary comes?"

"Very soon, Harry," said his mother; "go to the window and watch for the coach." The child eagerly obeyed. Another little fairy child sat on the ground at her feet, playing with some bricks; he looked up, shaking his fair curls from his brow, and said, "Me see coach too, ma."

She was going to reply, when the sound of *wheels made* her rise from the sofa.

"*Here they* are, mamma!" exclaimed Harry,

starting from the window. Mrs. Elton gave the baby to her mother and turned to the door, which Harry had opened. She could not move a step farther; she heard the steps of the coach let down, and then a light foot ascended the stairs. A tall, blooming girl stood before her, her long fair hair curling to the waist, and without a bonnet. Mary flew into her arms; she instinctively felt who it was, and Mrs. Elton, although the difference in the child she now clasped to her bosom to the one she had parted with was so great, could well understand the change.

"Mamma, dear mamma!"

"My own darling Mary!" was the mother's fervent reply.

We will leave the united family to the pleasure and joy of that happy evening, still more happy even than the one with which our story began. When we continue Mary's history, she will no longer be a little child, but a kind elder sister.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE took leave of Mary Elton on her return to her father's house, after an absence of three

years. She is now filling the responsible position of elder sister, and in all its affectionate duties her character is shown to great advantage. She had been delighted, on her return to Byford, to find her little brother Henry, whom she had left a toddling child of two years, now a fine noble boy of five. Little, delicate, fair-haired Willie soon learnt to look up to the gentle sister, who treated him as if he were in reality one of the fairies of which she had read. The baby was a new and lovely plaything, or, as she called it, a real living doll. Had she room in her heart for so many objects of love? Oh yes; they all quickly became dear to her; but it was to her brother Henry that her young feelings seemed to turn with the fondest affection; he was at once a playmate and a pupil. Mary's perfect acquaintance with the simple, yet fundamental parts of education, rendered her of great assistance to her mother in teaching Henry until he reached the age of eight years. Mary had not now to learn to read, write, spell, or work the first four important rules in arithmetic, and she *had a very* good general knowledge of ancient *and modern* history, geography, and grammar. *Mrs. Elton,* therefore, was able to commence

at once with the accomplishments; and her father, finding she had a taste for arithmetic, carried her forward in that science as well as in other more abstruse studies. She was to learn French and Italian, and he also made her study the Latin grammar, well knowing it to be the only foundation for the acquisition of languages. Mary's time was soon, therefore, completely occupied. Her mother's superior education enabled her to direct her studies, and, indeed, to be her only governess; for, although she had masters after awhile, her parents would never send her to school. Mr. Elton was a merchant in prosperous circumstances, but not rich enough to place his daughter where she could have the advantage of such instructions as he required for her; and Mrs. Elton feared the effects of evil example from other girls, so she remained at home under her mother's watchful eye.

From Mary's new position, as an elder sister, arose many difficulties, which required great patience and control of temper to contend with. Unaccustomed to young children, especially boys, her natural quickness was sometimes *sorely* tried; while their rough, boisterous *play startled* and surprised the quiet little girl.

Her mother's gentle teachings, and her own warm heart, soon taught her the necessary lesson of self-conquest and self-denial with those so much younger than herself; and Mrs. Elton discovered, to her great satisfaction, how much this discipline improved and strenghtened her little daughter's character. The careful training Mary had received, both from her mother and aunt, Mrs. Elton had adopted with her eldest boy, knowing well, that in a family where the elder children are obedient and orderly in their conduct, half the mother's trouble in her family is spared, by the effects of good example upon the younger branches. Mary being so much older, her influence was more powerful, and her gentle manners had a softening effect upon her brothers. At the same time, there was none of that fearful timidity about her which boys so contemptuously ridicule. Mrs. Elton considered moral courage, presence of mind, and endurance, some of the highest qualities a woman can possess. She taught her daughter the folly of shrinking at the sight of blood, or screaming when a beetle or a spider came near her, and *she was very* soon called upon to prove the good *effects* of her mother's instructions.

One evening, about two years after her return from Byford, she was seated in the rocking-chair by the nursery fire, holding her youngest brother in her lap, while the nurse went into the next room for some article which she supposed to be in one of the drawers. Not finding it, the woman placed the candle on the table, and left the room without remarking that Willie had followed her in. The door to this room from the nursery opened opposite to the fire-place; Mary therefore, as she sat singing to her little brother in a low tone, and rocking herself backwards and forwards, had her back to it. The nursery was dark, excepting the glimmering from a low fire in the grate. Presently Mary was startled by the reflection of a strong light on the wall before her: at the same moment she heard Willie's voice crying out, "Oh, Mary, here's a bonfire!" She started up, and saw with terror an open drawer at the bottom of the chest, full of flames. This drawer, which had been left partly open by the nurse, contained some paper shavings which, during the summer, had been used to ornament the empty grates. Quickly placing her little brother on the floor, she flew into the room, exclaiming, as she

snatched Willie from his dangerous position, "Oh! you naughty boy, what have you done?" Then snatching a blanket from the bed, she pressed it down with her hands over the burning mass, and succeeded in extinguishing the flames. The cries of the two children brought Mrs. Elton and the nurse up-stairs at the same time. Mary, overcome by the effort she had made, had seated herself on the floor, and, pale as death, was resting her head against a chair in a state of faintness. Willie stood sobbing as if his heart would break, conscious he had done wrong, and Freddy, on the floor in the nursery, screamed with terror.

"What *is* the matter?" said Mrs. Elton, as she lifted her fainting daughter and placed her on the bed.

"'Oh, mamma!" said the sobbing Willie, "I did it—I set fire to the shavings to make a bonfire, and Mary said I was a naughty boy, and she put it out with a blanket."

It was all explained now, and oh, how tenderly did Mrs. Elton bathe the temples of her courageous little girl, and soothe her when she recovered, with the warmest expressions of love and approbation. But she did not forget the trembling Willie; calling him to her, she

took him on her lap, and explained to him how dangerous it was for little boys to play with fire. "Why, my dear Willie," said his mother, "if Mary had not so quickly put out the fire, very likely your papa's house would have been burnt down."

"But, mamma," said the child, "little boys *do* play with fire. I saw them when they burnt Guy Faux, and they made a large bonfire too, mamma."

Mrs. Elton could scarcely help smiling. The children had been invited to spend the evening of the Fifth of November at the house of a friend living in the country, and from the windows they had seen the burning of Guy Faux, and a display of fireworks in the playground of an adjoining school. "Perhaps you did," said his mother; "but those little boys had masters and big boys to take care of them; besides, it was not in a house, but out of doors, where there could be very little danger. My Willie must never play with fire again. Suppose your pinafore had taken fire—you would have been burnt up like Guy Faux, and mamma would have lost her little Willie," she continued, pressing him to her bosom at the *thought.* "If ever Willie touches the candle,

or plays with fire again, mamma will be very sorry, but she must punish him very much." The little boy hid his face at this, to him, unusual threat, and without looking up, said, in a choking voice, "Mamma, I never, never will play with fire again."

This incident occurred not long after Mrs. Elton had been obliged to engage a stranger to supply the place of dear old Nurse. She had fondly and faithfully fulfilled her duties in the nursery, till age and infirmities had obliged her to give them up. She remained in Mrs. Elton's house till her death, and the children, especially Mary, mourned for her almost as a mother. Mary's presence of mind in the affair of Willie's bonfire relieved her mother of great anxiety, and from that day she encouraged her to make herself useful in the nursery, as, by helping the nurse, she could gain her kind feeling and confidence, and be a loving protection to her little brothers. Mrs. Elton was fortunate enough, a few months after, to secure the services of a very superior woman, under whose guidance Mary still continued to spend what time she could spare in the nursery. Mrs. Elton felt that there could be nothing derogatory or degrading in anything she might do

for her little brothers. Many a young mother, mourning over the death of one infant, or the deformity that threatened another from the carelessness of a servant, has bitterly lamented her ignorance of nursery duties. The constant demand upon Mary's time left her no room for idleness; certain hours for each study were strictly enforced by both parents; a sufficient, but not undue, length of time for music and drawing was also allowed; and when these and her nursery duties were accomplished, her time was her own, for reading and other recreations. By learning from her mother strict economy of time, and never wasting a moment, it was wonderful how much she could perform in one day. She accompanied the children in their walks, learned to mend and make their clothes, and, in short, promised fair to be that treasure to a mother—an affectionate, accomplished, useful, elder daughter.

Nearly four years passed away, during which time Mary improved so rapidly under the teaching she received from both parents, that they felt no regret at having kept her at home. Yet Mrs. Elton had discovered, in the earnest intensity of her daughter's feelings, that the nature she so much feared existed still, and

seemed to gain strength with advancing age, notwithstanding every effort to control it. Whatever Mr. Elton might think about educating his daughter at home, he did not intend to do the same with his boys. Both parents felt the discipline of school useful for a boy who had to fight his way through the world. A school is, in general, a little world of itself; and although much of evil may be, and often is, acquired there, from the effect of bad example, yet the influence of early teachings at home and a mother's gentle warnings and prayers are never wholly lost. They will cling to the boy—aye, and the man too, in the hour of the sharpest temptations—whether in the school-room, the counting-house, or the busy haunts of men. It is the sweet influence of a well-ordered home, and the judicious training of a tender mother, that can alone form the characters of England's men and women.

When Henry Elton reached the age of eight years, arrangements were made to send him to school. Parting from her brother was Mary's first real sorrow. The boy had entwined himself around every fibre of her affectionate heart. Nor was his love for her less *earnest.* She was, in his estimation, the dearest,

the most patient, the cleverest sister in the world; he could tell her all his joys, all his sorrows; she would enter into his amusements, however trivial, make tails for his kites, sew the sails of his boats, feed his white mice, and take care of his rabbits. There was no one like Mary. On the morning of his departure for school, the boy's manly spirit kept down the tears, lest his dear mother should grieve. Mary scarcely dared to wish him good-bye; she, however, struggled with her over-wrought feelings until he was gone, and then sobbed upon her mother's neck as if her heart would break. This was the first time Mrs. Elton had recognized, in its full force, the old intense feeling. Mary was older now, and childish disappointments had ceased to arouse it. The mother's quiet, calm remark covered her with shame: "My dear Mary, your brother has more self-command than you: he subdued his deepest feelings for my sake."

Oh! how bitterly the unselfish heart of the child regretted her burst of sorrow, when she saw tears, which she had caused, on her mother's usually placid face. She left the room, but returned in a few minutes, *smiling through* her tears: "Mother, I have

conquered; I will not grieve you by giving way."

Mrs. Elton kissed her fondly. "My dear child," she said, "you must, indeed, learn to control yourself: you cannot always expect me to be with you, to remind you as I have done to-day, or to help you to self-control. Mary, you must learn to look to a higher Power than myself for help." It was, however, some days before she could quite reconcile herself to her brother's absence. She missed him in the school-room, at meals, in the nursery, during their daily walks—indeed, every moment something occurred to remind her of him. Henry Elton was a boy whom any sister might love—noble, high-spirited, and truthful, intelligent far beyond his years, so much so as to form a companion even for his clever sister. She was proud of him in every way—proud of his handsome face and manly bearing. Henry was a great contrast to his sister; his black, piercing eyes were shaded by long lashes that rested on his clear brown cheek; and around his smooth, high forehead clustered curls of a dark, rich *colour.* The contrast between the brother and *sister was,* indeed, remarkable; and when, in

earnest conversation respecting some lesson or kind office in which she was assisting him, Mary would lean over her brother, mixing her bright auburn ringlets with his dark hair and complexion, the effect was very singular. Henry Elton was not perfect—no truly described character can ever be so; he possessed a passionate temper, and once, in a fit of rage, he struck his sister. Oh! how the gentle spirit shrunk from the blow; not on her arm did Mary feel the pain, it fell on her heart; and although, with bitter tears of sorrow and fondest caresses, he regained her instant forgiveness and love, yet Mary would have given worlds to recall the act, not for her own sake, but his: she wished him to be perfect, and she wanted to think him so. Ah! Mary, Mary, why did you twine that brother around your heart so fondly?—had you forgotten the cherries? Ah, yes! and the earnest, ardent spirit was enthusiastic still.

CHAPTER IX.

HENRY ELTON'S first holidays occurred at midsummer, and great was his dear mother's *anxiety lest* any evil example at school should

have injured her boy. He had been at home but one day, when the principles she had so earnestly instilled into his mind were put to the test. It was a lovely June morning. Mary and her brother, prepared for walking, were seated in the library, waiting for Nurse and the two younger children. Nearly twenty minutes passed, and as Nurse did not come, Henry grew impatient. "Shall we go on?" he said to his sister, "Nurse will soon overtake us."

"No," she replied; "we must not go out alone. Have you forgotten that, dear Henry?"

"I had almost. Oh, it is so tiresome waiting. I shall go down, and stand at the door. She cannot be long now."

"If I were you, I would stay here," said Mary; but he was gone, and did not hear her. She then took up a book, wondering what could keep the nurse, and feeling a little impatient herself.

In the meantime, Henry sauntered into the street. Everything looked gay and bright. The merry spring cries, as the vendors of different articles passed by; the distant hum of carriages; the voices of happy children already on their *way to the* parks; the musical cry of the flower-*women, with* their sweet-smelling beaupots of

flowers—all these were sights and sounds delightful to Henry; but they increased his impatience. Suddenly there struck upon his ear the sound of military music. Henry started, and listened; in a moment he remembered it was the 18th of June, the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo. He knew also that the detachment of soldiers who went daily to relieve the guard at Whitehall, were on that day accompanied by a splendid military band, and that they would go through an adjoining street. "I must just see it pass," thought Henry; "I shall be back again before Mary and Nurse come down." In a few moments, the gilded dresses, glittering in the sun, and the flashing of brass instruments, passed before his eyes; while the sound of the martial music and the spirit-stirring drum filled the music-loving child with ecstasy. Did he merely stop and look as it passed by? No: Henry had made the first false step in disobedience. All the rest of the way was downhill. On he went, mixing with a crowd of rude men and boys, unconscious of where he was going, or to what distance, till at the gate of a large building the music suddenly ceased. One by one the gaily dressed musicians, the splendid black horses

and their warlike riders, disappeared from his eyes. He was left standing in a strange place, nearly two miles away from home, and alone! He now reflected upon what he had done—disobeyed, grieved, and no doubt alarmed his dear mamma, deceived and forgotten his darling sister. How bitterly did he regret, and how eagerly ask his way home! To reach it, however, was not so easy. He walked very fast, became heated and tired, and having two or three times mistaken the directions given him, found himself, after more than an hour had passed away, apparently as far from home as ever. He was slowly walking on, longing, yet dreading, to see his dear mother, when he saw coming towards him a schoolfellow much older than himself, but, alas! possessing neither moral courage nor principle. Henry could not have met with a more dangerous companion. Arthur Ross, from his spirit and cleverness at school, was looked up to by the younger boys. Henry, therefore, was in danger of taking his advice, whatever it might be. "Why, Harry, my boy! all this way from home, and alone?" *said Arthur.*

"Yes," replied Henry, looking very sad; *"I followed* the Horse Guards' band, and I

was so much taken up with the music that I did not know which road we took. I seem to have been walking for hours, without getting nearer home."

"Oh, I will show you the way. But did you go by yourself?"

"Yes, and mamma will be very angry. She does not allow us to go out alone."

"Oh, nonsense! she cannot be angry for such a trifle as this; especially when she hears it was the military band you followed."

"My mamma does not call disobedience a trifle, I can tell you, Arthur," said Henry; "and as to the music, that makes it worse; for the rude men and boys in the crowd said wicked words to me, and called me names."

Arthur walked by the side of Henry, silently considering what could be done. He was fond of him, and anxious to save him, if possible, from the severe punishment, or even flogging, which he supposed was the cause of his dread. Arthur did not know that to Henry a look of sorrowful anger from his dear, gentle mamma was worse, far worse, than the severest punishment she could inflict upon him. At last he spoke: "Henry, you need not tell your mam-

ma where you have been, or, if you do, you need not repeat what the men and boys said to you; besides, you can tell her I have been with you, which will be true, you know; and then you can lay the blame on me."

For one moment there rested on Henry's mind a wish to escape his mother's anger by this untruthful excuse. It was but a moment, and that moment brought him within sight of a street he knew to be near his home. "No," said the little boy, "no, Arthur. Thank you for trying to save me; but I could not tell a lie for the world. I know where I am now, so good-bye. I shall tell mamma all the truth." So saying, he started off, and was out of sight in a moment.

Arthur stood looking the way he had gone for some time; then, turning on his heel, he said to himself, "I wish I had such courage; but what's the use? They never believe me, even when I do speak the truth." Ah, Arthur! whose fault was that?

We will now return to Mary. Not many minutes after Henry had left the room, Nurse *came down* stairs; Mary joined her, but on *reaching* the street-door they found it open *and Henry* nowhere to be seen.

"Where is Master Henry?" inquired the nurse.

"I am sure I don't know," said Mary, looking anxiously up and down the street; "he promised to wait for us here." They went to each corner, looked earnestly in every direction, and at last returned to the house to inquire if he were still there. After looking in every room, Mary opened the drawing-room door, and asked, "Mamma, is Henry here?"

"No, my love," said Mrs. Elton, looking up from her work; but as she did so she was startled by Mary's extreme paleness. "What is the matter, my dear?" she inquired.

"Oh! mamma, mamma—Henry—he is lost, we cannot find him anywhere," and she threw herself on the sofa in an agony of tears.

"Lost!" said Mrs. Elton, "what do you mean?" and for a moment even her own calmness gave way. Nurse entered the room and explained. "Leave the children with me," said Mrs. Elton, "and send the man in one direction, while you go another yourself; he certainly cannot be gone far." Nurse left the room. Mrs. Elton sat down, took off her youngest boy's hat and pelisse, and telling *Willie to* amuse him, she went to the sofa and

seated herself by her weeping daughter. She felt almost inclined to chide her for such violent grief on so trifling an occasion, but she could not bear to add to her pain. She, therefore inquired, "Mary, what is the matter?"

"Oh! mamma, if anything should happen to Henry—if he should be knocked down by a carriage, or meet with any accident—(you know he has never been out in London before by himself)—or if he should have gone to the Park alone and go near the river. Oh, mamma!" she exclaimed, shuddering, and covering her eyes, as if to shut out the picture her fancy had formed, "Oh, I cannot bear to think of it."

"But why *should* you think of it, Mary? your brother is still under the care of an Almighty power; he is intelligent, and not likely to lose himself for want of inquiring the way home. *I* am not fearing for his safety; the act of disobedience causes me the greatest pain; but my dear girl," said her mother, "what will become of you when you grow a woman, unless you check these feelings? Everything you love, every pleasure you enjoy, will cause you constant pain from fear of losing it. Mary, indeed, indeed you must not make such an idol of your brother—God may

think fit to take him from you." Mrs. Elton said this with quivering lips.

Mary looked up, and in that look her mother saw how fearful such a discipline would be. "Is there danger now, do you think, mamma?"

"No, my dear, certainly not. Come, Mary, conquer yourself once more; supposing I were like you—and Henry is equally dear to me—what would become of you? My dear child," she continued, "God may think proper to try you very severely if you fix your heart on earthly objects, and forget to love Him." The solemn manner of her mother awed Mary, she struggled to be calm—she dried her tears, and, to divert her thoughts, began to amuse her little brothers.

The servants returned without finding Henry; and Mrs. Elton, with all her confidence in the manly intelligence of her boy, began to feel anxious, especially when one o'clock arrived and he had not returned. In addition to her fear of the possibility of an accident, arose a dread, that having been tempted to disobey, he might be induced to tell her an *untruth; that* her noble, truthful Henry should *have learnt* evil habits at school. The thought

was agony. Nurse came to take the boys to dinner. As Willie left the room, he said, "Mamma, I think Henry went to hear the soldiers' band; I heard them while Nurse was putting on her bonnet. I did not like to say so before, mamma," said Willie, shaking his curls from his fair brow and blushing, "for fear you should be angry with him, and I thought he would soon be back. The soldiers would not take him away, would they, mamma?"

"No, my boy," said his mother, relieved beyond measure at being able to account for the boy's absence; "but never mind, go and have your dinner, Willie."

"Mamma, I never thought of the band—I did not hear it," said Mary.

"No, my dear, nor did I, but the nursery is at the back of the house, and you were in the library, reading, I suppose."

"Yes, mamma; and you mean I could hear nothing then."

Another half-hour passed. Mrs. Elton was pleased to see how Mary struggled with her fears, yet she had almost lost her self-control; and Mrs. Elton herself felt anxious—when the door opened, and the lost one entered! Mary

started from her sofa—a look from her mother checked her. The mother's own impulse was to clasp him in her arms with delight at finding him safe. But she remained still, and looking sadly at him, she said, "Henry, my Henry, where have you been?" Oh! how she trembled as she spoke, lest the answer should be untrue, or even partially so. There he stood before her, his eyes resting on the carpet, dreading his greatest punishment—that dear mother's anger. She need not to fear, in a moment, without a single word to excuse himself, the answer came.

"Mamma," and the little heart beat so as almost to choke his utterance, "I will tell you the truth. I went out by myself, and I followed the Horse Guards' band all the way to the barracks."

Mrs. Elton looked at her boy; he had never told her a lie; and she felt what it had cost him to risk her anger. She opened her arms, and the next moment Henry was sobbing on his mother's bosom, telling her how he had been tempted not only to disobey, but to *deceive her.*

"*Ah!* Henry," said his mother, "this

will teach you, I hope, how one false step leads to another. Had you been patient and remained with your sister, you would not have heard the music; having once heard it, you wished to see it, and then resistance was over. Again, if you had been walking with your sister and Nurse, Arthur Ross would have had no opportunity to tempt you to do wrong, even if you had met him."

Henry's conscience told him how true was every word his mother uttered; and when he saw how sorry poor Mary had been, and how he had grieved his mother, his repentance was so deep and sincere, that he was soon made happy by his mother's forgiveness, and by his sister's kiss of happiness that he had returned in safety.

Willie Elton was a very different boy to his brother. He had never been strong; and perhaps on that account, as well as natural disposition, he had very little energy of character. Sometimes, too, he would be fretful and impatient over his lessons, which was a great trial to Mary's quickness and impetuosity; she did not love poor Willie as she did her noble and high-spirited Henry. But Mrs. Elton encouraged her in every way to subdue herself for his sake;

and the little fellow, who loved his sister dearly, won his way to her heart by trying to supply Harry's place. The boy had many gentle, endearing ways, which she had overlooked, and now her heart bitterly accused itself for her neglect. Freddy, too, the youngest, who more resembled his eldest brother, one day laid his arms across her lap, and, looking up in her face, said, "Mary, make a kite for me, like you did for Henry once, will you?" Yes; indeed, she would, or anything else they liked. Conscience was awakened; and she one day told her mother, she could understand now why God sometimes took away from us the objects we loved too much, that we might learn to value those that were left behind. Henry, however, was still her idol, and she looked forward to his return at Christmas with the most intense anxiety.

Mr. Elton had placed his boy at a school kept by a clergyman, whose kind teachings and pleasing management had a great influence over his pupils. All the arrangements tended to soften and refine the manners, without destroying that manly spirit and noble bearing which every English boy should possess. *Their* amusements were chosen with

the same intent; and, to Henry's delight, music was one of them. He had great natural talent; and although so young, soon became, for his age, a very good performer on the flute. On his return at Christmas, he was in every way so much improved, that his parents and sister looked upon him with delight. He had become gentle and patient to his brothers; respectfully polite, yet fondly affectionate to his dear mother, and to his father an intelligent companion; while to Mary he seemed the *beau ideal* of all that was noble and clever.

These happy Christmas holidays were, to the brother and sister, too short for all the delightful plans they had laid out together. Duets to practise in the morning, walks in the afternoon, and some pleasant book or Christmas party in the evening. Henry had also a new object to love, in a little sister. On hearing of the birth of this baby, he had declared it impossible he could ever love another sister as he did dear Mary, but he very soon found his mistake. One he looked up to and loved as a guide and friend: for the other he felt all the love of an elder brother. "Mamma," he said, *one morning*, as he sat with the baby in his *lap, trying* to hold her as gently and nurse-

like as possible; "Mamma, when I grow a man, baby will be but a little girl; oh, how proud I shall be to take care of her and protect her. You are not jealous, are you, dear Mary, because I love baby?"

"Jealous, Harry, oh no!" said Mary, who was looking on partly with pleasure and partly with fear, lest he should let the baby fall.

"And I shall be a man too," said Willie, with a sudden show of spirit; "may I not take care of baby too?"

"Of course," said Mrs. Elton; "grown-up brothers should always be proud of taking care of their young sisters; but, Willie, baby will be nearly as old as Mary is now, when you are twenty."

"And I shall be twenty-two, mamma, quite a man then. Do you think baby will be like Mary?"

"No, my boy," said his mother; "she is more like yourself, she has dark eyes." The children pressed round their sister, who had taken the infant from Henry, and tried to discover the exact colour of those large eyes, which had already begun to notice and follow them about the room.

Mrs. Elton looked at her children as only a

mother can; her feelings were as earnest and enthusiastic as Mary's, but she had experienced enough of earth's sorrows to learn the Christian's lesson of the vanity of all earthly hopes. She had already lost her first-born son and an infant daughter; therefore her love for her beautiful, her noble Henry, trembled with its own intenseness. A cold, shuddering sensation would pass over her as the question arose in her mind—"Can it be possible that I may lose *him!*" The thought would be dismissed as the effect of nervousness; yet with a heart disciplined by religion and sorrow, she was enabled to wear these dearest of earthly ties as loosely as a fond mother ever can hope to do.

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER six months passed away, and again the dearly loved son and brother, improved in mind and person, returned to delight the family circle. Mr. Elton, anxious to make the summer vacation a season of real enjoyment, took his family to the sea-side. There *on the* sea-beach would the kind elder sister, *after* wandering about gathering shells and

sea-weeds with her three brothers, seat herself on the strand, and, pointing to the white sails here and there dotting the blue ocean, tell them a story of some poor little sailor-boy away from his fond mother, obliged to climb the mast when the wind was roaring, and the waves rolling like mountains over the trembling ship. Then there were long country walks, Mary and Henry alone; while as they went on, from some elevated spot or break between the trees, the wide expanse of the blue ocean could be seen. Those were indeed days of delight; life and its future appeared like the sky above them, without a cloud.

After this vacation, Henry returned to school in great spirits; he was trying for the prize, and, dearly as he loved home, he knew that to stay beyond the appointed time was not the way to ensure a reward. His brother Willie now accompanied him, and Henry felt it an honour indeed when his mother said to him, "Remember, Henry, your brother Willie is a delicate, timid boy. I entrust him to your care, to screen him from harm, to help him with his lessons, and to protect him from the effects of evil example." Mary had now *but two in* the nursery, and her dear little

sister very soon became an object for her tenderest care. Freddy was growing a great boy; he resembled his eldest brother, and had much of his intelligence, and bold, manly spirit. But it was of her absent brother Henry that Mary constantly thought; she always began to count the weeks to the time of his return. Nine weeks to Michaelmas—he would then be at home for a few days, and after that the time would slip away quickly, bringing the happy Christmas holidays. Mrs. Elton saw with pain this ardent attachment to her eldest brother; he was everything to her.

Her thoughts were, however, diverted from him by the dangerous illness of Freddy and his little sister; both children were ill before Mrs. Elton discovered the disorder to be the measles. Neither Henry nor Willie had yet had this complaint; it was, therefore, arranged for them to stay at school during the Christmas vacation, with a promise that, in the spring, Mr. Elton would take apartments near them, for the invalids, and they could all meet. Henry was now nearly eleven years *old, and he* bore the disappointment with a *manly spirit.* Mary, on the contrary, was

almost inconsolable at the arrangement; her brother was her idol, and having made up her mind to his coming home at Christmas, she could not easily submit. But when fears arose that Freddy would die, her affection for the dear little suffering boy and pity for her gentle mother, who she knew would feel as deeply at parting with one as with another, brought out her best feelings, and she became at once the kindest nurse and the gentlest consoler. Freddy, however, recovered, as if from the grave; and the kind-hearted, affectionate sister was never tired of guiding, leading, and tending him, through his long weakness and slow recovery.

Mary Elton was now approaching her fifteenth year. Careful training, advantages of no common order in education, and religious instruction from her mother, were forming a character to all appearance lovely and of good report. Her love for her brother Henry, and the affection between the two—for his love was equal to hers, though less enthusiastic—was still a beautiful sight. This earnest attachment on the part of Mary was quite excusable; she had lost a brother and a sister between herself and Henry; he was,

therefore, the only one of her brothers fit for a companion; yet her mother trembled—she knew not why.

During the Midsummer vacation, in which Mary's fifteenth birthday occurred, she was again called upon to exercise her presence of mind, in a moment of even greater peril than before. Nurse had been ironing on the nursery table, and, to get the last of the daylight, she had pushed it close to the open window; darkness, however, obliged her to light a candle and pull down the blind. Having finished her ironing, she was about to remove the table, when the sound of little Annie's voice from the next room took her to the child's bedside. The little girl had been dreaming uneasily, and could not be satisfied unless Nurse took her in her arms for a few moments. She carried her into the nursery, and sat down in the rocking-chair, soothing and caressing her. Mary, who had heard her sister's voice, came to the door, to inquire what was the matter. She was followed by a servant carrying a tray with Nurse's supper. As the girl entered the room, she lifted her foot and kicked the door, to shut it after her. The *strong* draught occasioned by its rapid closing

blew the blind against the candle, and, in a moment, it caught fire; and, while the flame ran rapidly upwards, the woman set down the tray, and screamed. Mary, without a moment's hesitation, jumped on the table, and, gathering the blind up in her hands, pressed one part against the other quickly and firmly, and, by so doing, with some difficulty extinguished the flames. This time she did not faint: but, pale, trembling, and breathless, she jumped from the table, and wondered at her own courage.

"Oh, Miss Mary," said the housemaid, who had covered her eyes with her hands the moment Mary sprang to the blind, "what should we have done if you had not been here?"

"It's all very fine for you to talk," said Nurse, who sat clasping the little girl to her bosom, almost paralysed with terror. "If you had shut the door properly, instead of in that vulgar way, with your foot, it would not have happened."

"Oh, pray," said Mary, "don't quarrel about it. It is over now, thank God; and perhaps you can find me something to do my hands good; they are terribly burnt."

"Miss Mary, I beg your pardon," said

Nurse, jumping up, and seating the child in a chair; "let me see what you have done."

"Put Annie into bed first, please," said Mary, as the little girl opened her large eyes, and looked ready to cry at being so unceremoniously treated.

"Me don't want to go to bed: me frightened," said the child.

"Mary will come and sit with you, darling," said her sister; and following Nurse as she carried the child to her room, she seated herself by her bed, and, though suffering agony from her burnt hands, she talked and soothed her to sleep. Poor Mary! it was more than she could do herself all night. In the morning, however, her hands were covered with blisters, and the pain had subsided. Mrs. Elton heard nothing of the matter until Mary appeared at the breakfast-table, the next morning, both hands carefully and loosely wrapped in linen. She did not praise her daughter for this effort of presence of mind; but Mary saw how pleased she felt, and Henry, who thought his sister by this act as brave as *a soldier, waited* upon her in every way, and *did his utmost* to make amends for the loss of *her hands.* Mary was careful not to use

them: she knew that so long as the blisters remained unbroken there was no danger of a sore or wound. Nature raises blisters over a burn, and fills them with water, to protect her work while she heals the part underneath, and covers it with a new skin. When this is accomplished, the water disperses, the blister becomes dry, breaks and peels off; it is no longer wanted. Some persons have a very false idea that these blisters should be broken, to let out the water. Many have suffered for months, and been scarred for life, in consequence of such treatment.

Henry Elton had passed his eleventh year when he returned to school after this vacation; he was in the bloom of health, and had delighted all the dear friends at home, by carrying off two or three prizes at school; it was impossible to help loving a boy of such noble, generous character.

Willie, too, was much improved; he was stronger in health, more manly, and making great progress. Mary and her mother stood at the door watching them, as they entered their father's open chaise; Henry, with his *permission,* being allowed to drive.

"*Oh, mamma,*" said Mary, "they are both

dear boys; but is not Harry a noble fellow? I will never get married, mamma," she continued. "Henry says I shall keep his house for him when he is a man; and if he marries, I am certain I shall love his wife; he is sure to make a good choice, don't you think so?"

"Mary, my love," said her mother, with a sigh, "do not make up your mind to anything; we know not what a day may bring forth."

"Oh, mamma, I feel so happy!" she continued, not noticing her mother's remark. "Every year makes Harry more of a companion for me; he is a noble, clever fellow." So saying, she flew upstairs, singing like a bird, and looking forward to September, as usual, for the Michaelmas vacation.

One Saturday evening, early in that September for which Mary had been longing, she was busy in the nursery, as usual; Mrs. Elton, seated by the fire, had her youngest girl in her lap. The child had been complaining during the day, and mamma's hand was the most persuasive to administer medicine; she had taken it bravely, and was now being soothed on her mother's bosom before placing her in *bed.* Mary had been for some minutes in

Freddy's room, and had just wished him good night, when she heard the Nurse's voice exclaiming hastily, "Miss Mary, your mamma is ill."

Mary flew to her mother. "Mamma, dear mamma, what is it?" Mrs. Elton, pale as death, pointed to an open letter which had fallen from her hands on the floor, as Nurse had taken the little girl from her lap. Mary did not pick up the letter; she could not touch it; what could it contain to affect her usually calm mother so seriously? Faint as she was, Mrs. Elton struggled to regain composure; and then she said, gently, "Mary, dearest, perhaps I am foolish to be so much alarmed; it may be nothing after all. That letter is from C——; your dear brother Henry is ill."

Like one in a dream, Mary now took up the letter, and read it. The words seemed to burn themselves into her brain—they stunned her, yet she spoke words of comfort and hope to her mother. Mrs. Elton, who had struggled to hide her own fears for Mary's sake, was deceived by this apparent calmness, and greatly relieved. They had still to wait for Mr. Elton's return; he had gone into the

country on business, and did not reach home till nearly ten o'clock. Late as it was, Mr. Elton felt sure something in the letter implied that immediate attention was necessary, but he did not alarm his wife and daughter. His horse was too tired, after his long journey, for more work. He therefore ordered a post-chaise, and started at once, with Mrs. Elton, determining to bring the dear boy home, before it might be too late to move him.

Mary, to whom suspense was agony, still felt relieved when she found they were going. Mrs. Elton kissed her as she got into the chaise, and whispered, "Go to bed directly, my love, and try to sleep; remember, your brother is in the hands of God." Mary obeyed; and such is the effect of violent grief that she slept heavily till the morning. The awakening brought a recollection of some undefined sorrow. She dressed quickly, and breakfasted in the nursery with the children—Nurse cheering and encouraging her to eat. Mary could not understand her own feelings. She had not shed a tear; and there seemed a *kind of* deadness on her mind which made her *feel like* one in a dream. However, she took *Nurse's* advice, and went with Freddy to

church. "It will do you good, Miss Mary," said the kind creature, who did not like to see the dull look on her generally animated face.

"Perhaps it will, nurse," said Mary, abstractedly.

The afternoon passed away slowly and sadly: towards the close of it, as she sat in the drawing-room, leaning back in the arm-chair, and trying to realize the possibility that her brother could be so very ill, a carriage stopped at the door; she flew into the hall, and met her father carrying in his arms his darling boy. But oh! how changed. Pale, and faint with the journey, and disfigured by the marks of leeches on his forehead, from which the clustering curls had been cut to make way for them. Mechanically she followed her father, and stood by him as he laid the fainting boy on the sofa; she could not believe in her own powers of vision. Could this be Henry, her noble, handsome brother? He opened his eyes, and said, "Mary!" She knelt and kissed the pale face; she could not speak, her heart seemed turned to stone. The doctor arrived; Mary moved to let him approach her brother, she stood and looked on *and listened,* yet her mind seemed unable to

comprehend what was passing. After the usual routine of feeling the pulse, and looking at the tongue, the doctor inquired, "My boy, have you had a fall lately?"

"No, sir," said Henry, rousing himself.

"Try to remember, have you at any time had a blow on your head at school?"

Henry closed his eyes and seemed to consider. "I was struck with the cricket-ball," said Henry, "the last time I played."

"Where did it strike you?"

"At the back of my head; I did not feel it much, and I was so sick in the evening, I forgot all about it."

The doctor looked grave; he drew Mr. Elton away to a window, where they conversed in a low tone. Mrs. Elton watched her husband's countenance with the deepest anxiety: something seemed to whisper there was no hope, and the mother's loving yet disciplined heart could not yet say, "Thy will be done." Mary also watched the doctor's face, as if she could there seek some explanation of the scene before her.

Presently Henry spoke again. "Mary!" She instantly knelt at his side and clasped *his hand; his* mother sat at the foot of the

sofa. He looked at her and said, "Don't go away, dear mamma; I like you both to stay near me."

"We will not leave you, darling," said Mrs. Elton. As she spoke there came again over the dear boy's face that pallid tinge which had so startled his sister; at the same moment the doctor moved towards them.

"Get him to bed as soon as you can," he said, cheerfully; "the journey has fatigued him. You must not judge of his symptoms now; a night's rest may do wonders. I will be here very early in the morning."

There was something cheering in this, and and the mother and sister were not long in obeying the doctor's orders. It was not till Mary had seen him sink into a deep sleep that she could be induced to leave the room. Mrs. Elton trembled as she observed the expression of Mary's face; and, much as she suffered herself, she determined to probe the wound to the very quick, if by so doing she could produce tears. Mary, led by her mother, entered the drawing-room, where the untasted tea stood on the table. Her father went up stairs to look at his boy; his heart trembled for his noble, generous Henry: the doctor had pre-

pared him for the worst, and he could not bear the inquiring looks of his wife and daughter. When they were alone, Mrs. Elton seated herself on the sofa, and drawing her daughter towards her, she said, "Mary, if God should think fit to take your dear brother to heaven, can you say, 'Thy will be done'?" The gentle tone, the look of subdued sorrow, went to Mary's heart; she burst into an agony of tears.

"I cannot, mamma; oh, indeed, I cannot! Oh, he must not die, I cannot part with him!" and again she sobbed convulsively.

Mrs. Elton did not check this outburst of sorrow; she knew how it would relieve her; silently the sad tears were flowing from her own eyes. She did not speak for some minutes; then drawing her sobbing daughter towards her, and resting her head on her bosom, she said, "My dear Mary, it may please Almighty God to restore your dear brother to health; while there is life there is hope, but, my love, you *must* try to prepare for the worst. God often takes away those we love most dearly to make us seek our happiness in Him. At the same time, it is right to use all means for his recovery, and pray that, if pos*sible, this* great sorrow may be removed."

As Mrs. Elton finished speaking, her voice faltered. Mary looked up—that loving, gentle mother was in tears.

"Oh, dearest mother, how selfish I am, always forgetting you! Oh, if I could be calm and govern myself like you do! But mamma," and she clasped her hands, "he will not die? Oh, he cannot; how can I lose him!" and again the tears burst forth.

Mr. Elton entered the room. "Mary," he said, quietly, "your mother and I are tired; will you not make us some tea?" Again she was reminded of her selfish sorrow; she started up, and with a violent effort checked her tears and prepared to obey.

CHAPTER XI.

SLOWLY and sadly passed the days of that mournful week, each one bearing away with it the trembling hopes of dear Henry's recovery. Sunday morning arrived; every one save Mary felt that he must die; she could not, and would not, believe it, although he had been speechless for some days, and at times insensible. On this morning Mary was stand-

ing with her mother at his bedside; he looked up, and something like intelligence gleamed in his dark eyes, whose dilated pupils gave them an unusual brightness. "Do you know me, darling?" his mother asked, bending over him. He could not reply, but, lifting his hand, he passed it softly over her face. She stooped and kissed his flushed cheeks; then turned from him to hide her tears. A slight, almost imperceptible turn of the head, as if looking for Mary, brought her to his side; as she knelt by him, he again lifted up his hand, and laid it on her head; even as it rested there, the beautiful eyes became fixed, and Mary beheld with terror the first convulsive struggle with death. Hours passed away, and still that youthful form, struck down in the very bloom of health, struggled with the grim foe. The Sabbath passed away, the morning dawned, and yet he lived on. At last, Mary's hopes were gone. The same deadened feeling oppressed her; nothing, not even her mother's sorrow, could move her to tears; she even stood with her father, watching her brother's painful death-bed. Her father had taken her there in the hope of breaking up the *fountains* of grief, but without effect. She

had ascertained from the doctor that her brother was insensible to pain, and she could not realize, in the distorted, agonized body before her, the brother she loved; she could only now long that the weary, convulsed limbs might soon be at rest. Towards evening the struggles gradually subsided, and there passed over the distorted features that change so sublime, yet terrible. Mary clung to her father's arm. "Go down to your mother," he whispered. Mr. Elton feared the effect which might be produced upon his daughter by seeing her brother actually die. She obeyed his command in silent dread, but ere she closed the door, she heard the last sigh that carried the happy spirit to heaven.

Death! ah, what is it that in a moment invests the chamber where lie the remains of a loved one with terror? Yet so it is. Mary kept the key of the linen-press, and Nurse, who with streaming eyes was performing the last offices for the dead, thought to arouse her from that terrible look of stupefied grief. She therefore asked her to give out what was required. Mary did as she was desired, and brought the articles to the door of the room, but nothing could induce her to enter. Mrs.

Elton sent for her; she came, and seating herself by her weeping mother, drew her head gently down, wiped the tears as they fell, but neither spoke nor wept. "You had better go to bed, my dear Mary," said her mother, for once too much absorbed in grief to notice Mary's unnatural calmness.

Mary obeyed; she ascended the stairs as if she walked on air, entered her room, locked the door, and throwing herself on her knees, she exclaimed, in choking accents, "Great God, give me patience to bear this dreadful trial; oh, it is too much! Why is he taken away from me? Oh, I cannot pray," she exclaimed, rising from her knees, and throwing herself on the bed, dressed as she was. "I feel like Jonah—I feel angry with God; oh, what will become of me?" She pressed back her hair from her forehead, and covered her eyes, as if to shut out the scenes she had witnessed. Then a kind of stupor came over her, and at length, worn out with exhaustion, she sank into a death-like sleep.

Before Mrs. Elton retired to her room, she inquired for her daughter. "Miss Mary has been in bed some time, ma'am," said the *housemaid*, who thought Mary's quietness a

favourable sign. "I think she must be asleep, for I knocked at her door just now, and she did not answer." Thankful to hear this, and exhausted with grief and watching, Mrs. Elton hastened to follow, as she thought, her daughter's example. *She* also knelt, and, with bitter tears, prayed for a submissive spirit, and struggled hard to say, "Thy will be done;" until there fell upon her the calm He only can give who has said, "He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee."

In the morning, her first thought was for Mary. She dressed quickly, and hastened to her room; but, on attempting to enter, was startled to find the door locked. She knocked anxiously and loudly; it was opened almost immediately by Mary herself, quite dressed—her hair and clothes in disorder, her face flushed and eyes unnaturally bright. "Why, Mary, my dear girl," said her mother, "have you not been to bed?"

"No, mamma, I could not; I felt so wretched. I think I have been to sleep, though," she continued, pressing her hand to her forehead, and looking bewildered.

Mrs. Elton looked at her with terror. What

could she do to break the spell? Must she lose her Mary also? The prayer of the Syro-Phœnician woman arose from her heart—"Lord, help me." In a moment, as if in answer to the prayer, a thought suggested itself. "Come, my dear girl," she said, kindly, "bathe your face in cold water; it will refresh you—and let me brush your hair."

Mary obeyed, and stood patiently while her mother combed out the long ringlets, which were Mary's principal claim to personal beauty. She then took her hand, and led her from her room towards the chamber of death. "I cannot go in there, mamma," she exclaimed, as they approached the door, at the same time attempting to withdraw her hand; but her mother held it firmly.

"Why do you not wish to go in, Mary; are you afraid?"

"No, mamma, there is nothing, I know, to be afraid of; but I cannot bear to think it is my beautiful brother Henry looking so frightful."

"If that is all, Mary, believe your mother's words: I have been there this morning already; there is nothing frightful in the remains of your *poor* brother. The calm, placid face of death,

my dear Mary, is often very beautiful. Poets have even written in its praise. But come," she continued, "putting her arm round her, and forcing her gently forward, "will you not trust your own mother?"

Tremblingly, Mary entered the room, and looked on as her mother uncovered the face of her once beautiful boy. Not till then did she know how lovely that face had become—how changed since last she saw it, flushed with agony, distorted with pain, and convulsed in the struggles of death! Now it was calm and placid; a smile seemed to play about the lips; and she stood and gazed upon that face till, with a sudden effort, she threw herself upon her knees, exclaiming, "Oh! Henry, my darling brother!" while a torrent of long-suppressed tears gushed forth. Mrs. Elton's own tears flowed; but she let her daughter weep on, even almost convulsively, without interrupting her. At length, as she became calmer, she heard her mother's voice gently repeating, "But I would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in

Jesus will God bring with Him." The words of that Book, in whose pages may be found a balm for every earthly sorrow, fell upon her mind with a soothing influence, and she looked up for the first time through the gloom of that shrouded room, from the sleeping clay to the glorified spirit in heaven.

During the week preceding the funeral, Mary remained calm, and seemingly submissive; yet she startled her mother by her frequent visits to her brother's room. There was a morbid sensitiveness about her, which made her feel that while her brother was still lying there, so calm and placid, as if asleep, she had not really lost him; and she would linger, as if spell-bound, by the open coffin, till her mother called her away.

The plan now adopted by her judicious mother to divert her mind, was painful, yet it succeeded; she expressed her fears that little Annie's black frock would not be finished, unless Mary would make it. A burst of tears followed the request, yet she set herself diligently to work to the task. The evening before the funeral she had entered her bedroom, accompanied by the housemaid, who brought in her black dress for the morn-

ing. "Put it out of my sight, Sarah!" she exclaimed, covering her eyes. Then suddenly she started up: "To-morrow—yes, to-morrow, they will take him away, and I have not got a lock of that beautiful hair. Oh, how could I forget it?" With nervous, trembling fingers, she took up the candle, and turned towards the door.

"Oh pray, Miss Mary, don't go into that room to-night, I cannot go with you."

"Then I will go by myself," said Mary, "for I must have it." She looked so excited and flushed, that the young woman, conquering her own dread, followed her in dismay. When they approached the coffin, Mary removed the lid, and took off the cap. Her dear brother's curls had all been cut off, except a few at the back; just as she was about to lift the head for the purpose of obtaining what she wished, she suddenly remembered she had no scissors. "Sarah," she exclaimed, "will you fetch my scissors? they are down stairs, on the nursery table." The woman, who had been holding the candle, and looking on with awe, at the calm, loving manner in which Mary touched the lifeless remains of her once noble brother, without a thought, still carrying the candle in

her hand, left the room and her young mistress by the open coffin in the dark! Mary's first impulse was to follow her; she could not repress a shudder at her position—alone, with the dead, in the dark! It was but a moment. The calm reflection that the sleeping clay before her could do her no harm, removed all fear. Again the words of the holy Book fell like balm upon her wounded spirit, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory." Mary could realize the idea that her brother should rise again, but she could not yet separate herself from him in the body; she could not look upwards and think of him as clothed in a white robe before the throne of God.

She was still standing with her hand on the open coffin, when, breathless with haste and alarm, Sarah returned.

"Oh, Miss Mary," she exclaimed, "how thankful I am to see you safe! I never thought of having left you in the dark till I *got down* stairs; I quite expected to find you *had fainted* away or fallen down in a fit. But *you don't* appear afraid."

"What should I be afraid of?" said Mary; "this cold, marble image could not hurt me."

The poor girl, who was pale with her own fears at having left Mary in the dark, silently held the candle, while, with gentle hands, she cut one dark curl from the back of her brother's head; then quietly replacing the coffin lid, she left the room, thankful that no foolish fear had deprived her of courage to obtain the wished-for treasure.

A funeral, with its hearse and nodding plumes!—then, and then only, do we realize that the loved one is gone. Death itself is a shock—a change that passes over the beloved object. The stern grave is a reality; thus does human nature cling to earth. So also are we taught how far inferior is the most lovely of earth's fairest forms to the immortal spirit it embodies. When once the spirit has fled, the body sinks to decay, and would soon become loathsome to our sight, and by this the Christian is taught to forget the form so loved on earth, and to think of one more bright and beautiful in heaven.

Much as Mary had dreaded the day that was to consign her brother to the grave, she *had not* expected to feel it so deeply. The

last link was broken—the last tie that bound her to the decaying form of her dearly-loved brother was gone. She could not look up—down into the cold grave her heart would rest. The same tearless agony displayed itself from the moment the coffin was screwed down, shutting him for ever from her sight. She heard it carried down stairs; watched the procession as it slowly passed the shrouded windows, with flushed cheeks and dilated eyes.

This last stroke was too much, and before morning she was prostrate with fever and delirium. The distress of the bereaved and suffering mother, called upon to bear this additional trial, can be well understood. For many days it was expected that the fondly attached brother and sister would be laid side by side in one grave; but the youthful constitution rallied. She arose from that sick-bed, calm and submissive. This, her first deep affliction, had disciplined her heart. Her mother's gentle teachings and prayers were at length successful: she could kneel, though with tears *streaming* down her cheeks, and say, "Thy *will, O God,* be done!" Yet it was months *before she* could bear the sight of any article

of his clothes, a book, or an air that he loved, without recalling her sorrow, and producing torrents of tears; still she had been taught in the school of affliction, and felt the frailty of all earthly blessings.

Years have passed since Mary Elton lost her dearly-loved brother. Many dear friends have been laid in the cold grave. She has been called upon to endure the loss of home, friends, and property. She has had to battle with the world, and endure coldness and neglect; but amidst all, she has been enabled to say, even with a heart bursting with sorrow, "Thy will, O God, be done!"

THE END.

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